

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Jesuit Educational
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Coping with Anxiety

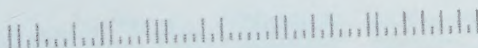
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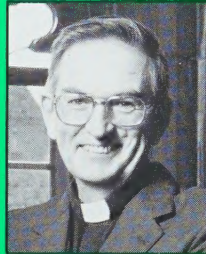
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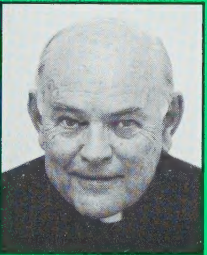
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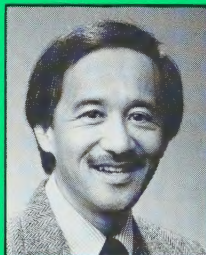
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Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

Book reviews, which should not exceed 600 words in length, should be sent to the Book Review Editor, Jon O'Brien, S.J., D.O., c/o HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (for address, see above).

Unaccepted manuscripts will not be returned unless requested and submitted with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

MORE TIME FOR LIVING

The often-heard complaint "There's never enough time" may be on the way to extinction. Its demise won't come soon, but it could happen sometime during the next century. Scientists have just reported their success in changing the biological clock in laboratory animals so that they no longer live on a 24-hour cycle, as do all types of organisms, from microbes to humans. Continuing research begun decades ago on fruit flies and bread-mold genes, experimenters have now reset the "clock gene" in mice to give them a daily rhythm as many as four hours longer than normal. No efforts have been made thus far to take hold of the human biological clock and readjust it. But this possibility must already be alive and tempting in the minds of avant-garde biologists and geneticists.

Researchers at Northwestern University in Illinois, under the direction of Dr. Joseph Takahashi, have found that in mammals, the master clock operates in the brain within an area the size of a pinhead, consisting of about 10,000 nerve cells, each one housing a tiny clock among its genes and proteins. In humans, this mechanism controls the sleep-wake cycle, the daily flow of a variety of hormones, and fluctuations in mental alertness. Common signs of a temporarily maladjusted clock are the physical and mental distress experienced by persons changing their work shift or flying through more time zones than the brain can promptly handle. Dr. Takahashi's studies have produced what Dr. Charles A. Czeisler, a Boston neuroendocrinologist, calls "a landmark discovery which holds great promise for understanding the underpinnings of the human biological clock."

What if scientists one day will not just understand our built-in clock but be able to reset it, as they have already done in mice, and thereby add four or even

more hours to our daily life? What would we do with such a windfall?

A twenty-eight or thirty-hour cycle might, for one thing, give the 50 percent of American adults who suffer chronically from self-inflicted insomnia a chance to regularly get enough sleep to eliminate their usual fatigue and irritability. People who habitually bring hours worth of unfinished work home from the workplace could get it all done at the office by quitting time if they wanted to. We might also see a reduction in heart attacks if the always-hurried, coronary-prone Type-A individuals would start doing only one thing at a time and get rid of their constant sense of time urgency.

On the other hand, it's more likely—and I would bet money—that most Americans with hours of extra time available every day would take advantage of the chance to increase their income, and there would be no significant improvement in the amount of time parents spend with their children and each other. Moreover, people who don't know how to say no to the requests and demands of others would in all probability go right on saying yes too often and feeling overwhelmed. And the workaholics would continue to fill their every waking moment with tasks that virtually enslave them.

Some people, however, if given the chance to experience longer days and to enjoy some of the things they now with regret forgo, would build into their lives on a regular basis more time for such things as listening to music, reading good books, getting more exercise, being with their children, visiting friends, planting flowers, and enriching their spirituality. Such individuals would be capitalizing on the opportunity to live what all the self-help books so popular today are calling "a balanced life." We would simply need to ask ourselves, "What are the things I would love to be able to include and enjoy, if I only had more time?" to recognize what a blessing it would be to have a thousand or more hours of discretionary time added to every year of our life.

But why wait? We don't need scientists who manipulate body clocks to find a way to better program our lives. That's what a summer vacation is for, isn't it? It's a chance to think about and find a way to correct the imbalance in our daily commitments, to bring back into our lives the people and activities we've been neglecting. It's a chance to ask God to teach us to live all year long the way human beings should: *humanly*. God is the one

who designed the clock we were born with, so I have no doubt about God's readiness to help us learn how to use all the hours of our lifetime both gratefully and well.



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.
Editor-in-Chief

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

The board of the Interfaith Sexual Trauma Institute (ISTI) is grateful for your printing our last letter, noting that a conference titled "The Gift of Power in Communities of Faith: Creative or Destructive?" is scheduled for June 28 at the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

What I would like to add is that ISTI is planning a three-day national conference at Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, on June 8-10, 1998. The title will be "After Awareness: Preventing Abuse by Creating Healthy Communities." In our call for presenters, we are inviting victims, clinicians, writers, researchers, educators, advocates, trainers, and others of all faith traditions to submit proposals for presentations on clergy sexual misconduct

(victim issues, offender issues, community issues, prevention and education, policies and procedures) and on creating healthy communities of faith (sexuality and spirituality, gender equity, boundaries and ethical issues, responsible leadership, and related concerns.)

We want the readers of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT to consider themselves strongly invited to participate. For more information, or to submit a proposal, they can contact ISTI, Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota 56321 (phone 320-363-3994; fax 320-363-3954; e-mail ISTI@osbsju.edu; home page <http://www.osb.org/isti/>).

Roman Paur, O.S.B.
Executive Director

Religious Life Tomorrow

Donna J. Markham, O.P., Ph.D.

Albert Einstein said that if a beam of light passes near a large solid object, gravitation will actually bend the light's path toward that object. I cannot claim to be an expert in the field of physics or on the theory of relativity, but when I think about that image, it strikes me that there is something wondrous in it. Light is attracted toward something solid; it can't avoid it. Emitted energy is drawn toward, bends toward, something. The force of gravity and the energy of light interact in some incredibly mysterious way. Stars—those fiery masses illuminating the heavens—simultaneously issue energy and draw matter toward them in a dancing interplay of sending forth and drawing toward, of offering and embracing, of emanation and bonding. This interplay suggests to me the intrinsic connection between missioning and connecting—between reaching out in ministry and drawing toward one another in community.

This article examines the fascinating interrelation of community in mission and community as an expression of mission. It also addresses several challenges that offer the potential for more vividly enlightening our communal life in mission: (1) increasing the clarity of corporate identity and boundaries, which inform the living out of our particular charisms; (2) deepening our accountability in mission; (3) fostering more candid communication

on matters of the heart; (4) developing our ability to manage conflict; and, finally, (5) accepting the monumental challenge of healing serious societal rifts.

COMMITMENT TO GLOBAL COMMUNION

I believe that many signs of passionate, illuminating energy are emanating from us as we move toward new definitions of our identity in mission and new understandings of the centrality of community as a means for and an expression of that mission. I am convinced that energy is increasingly being unleashed as we become more aware that we have nothing left to lose but our security. As I comment on movements of energy and light in religious life, I will also identify actions that could serve to bind or snuff them out. At this fragile moment, much is in the process of creative redefinition. Through benign neglect, sheer exhaustion, or anxious distraction, the newly emerging could easily be extinguished; it is vital that we do not allow that to happen.

The more we read, the more we study, the more we reflect on our experience as members of a culture that values individualism, the more we become convinced that the issue of community is the central and primary paradigm for entering the next millennium. I am quick to caution, however, that I refer not simply

Will we have the clarity to refuse admission to persons who do not identify with our purpose and charism, or will we accept anyone who wishes to join because we are desperate for new members?

to community for its own sake but to the vibrant interconnection and bonding necessary if we are to respond effectively to the marked forms of alienation that so characterize our times. We know that the deliberate, untiring act of building the circle of friends, fostering the interconnections of human compassion, and interweaving high-energy networks of relationships forms our mandate for the future. Community itself becomes part of the foundation—part of the illumination, if you will, of the living covenant between human beings and the world matrix in which we live and work. It is a particular gift that we religious are obliged to offer to our world. We have much to contribute to this mandate. The good of our planet and of all that is created, the preservation of life, is dependent on the commitment to fashioning a global communion committed to interdependence, healthy inner-directedness, mutuality and authority, a strong focus on the mission of the gospel, and a willingness to author the next generation.

As we increasingly take risks to reach out in mission, we are drawn toward one another at a depth we have not experienced before. I believe there is a deepening passion in us to risk all in the service of the poor, the oppressed, the abandoned—to go for broke, to let the fire of prophetic witness catch hold of us as we respond to absolute human need.

IDENTITY AND BOUNDARIES

Our sense of identity as members of a particular religious institute is critically important today—

whether we be Sisters of Mercy, reaching out to the poor, the sick, the homeless, the abandoned—or Dominicans, called to search and proclaim truth in light of contemporary heresies—or Franciscans, called to witness to radical simplicity and care for creation. Our risk to draw closer together in community stands as a challenge to the rampant separatism that so permeates our world and our ecclesial experience. To take the risk to reach out in trust toward the unknown strengthens and bonds hearts in the face of the enormous challenges that confront us today. Our clear and committed love for those who are most vulnerable and most exploited in our world, along with the consequent intensification of our communal bonding, will forge the future of religious life.

When a community has a sense of identity, it manifests an inherent coherence that enables it to trust itself and to represent its mission and function to the public it serves. It owns a sense of its boundaries; it is able to articulate requirements for membership and does not compromise its integrity by blurring definitions to the extent that membership becomes indistinguishable from nonmembership and the community no longer knows what it stands for. A sense of identity allows the community to enter into collaborative efforts without feeling intimidated or apprehensive that it might lose its corporate self. Furthermore, it enables the community to articulate criteria for belonging—criteria for vowed membership, for associates, for affiliates, for volunteers. It enables the community to engage in evaluative processes through which persons hold themselves mutually accountable for fulfilling the criteria for belonging. The concept of broad-based, all-inclusive communities is dangerous and destructive because it contains a hidden assumption that there are no criteria for exclusion. This severely compromises identity.

We must face the challenges inherent in proclaiming our identity. Will we risk challenging ourselves to live up to the criteria? Do we have the courage to collaborate with those who are different, comfortable that we will not lose ourselves in the process but will have much to offer in the creation of what is to come? Will we have the clarity to refuse admission to persons who do not identify with our purpose and charism, or will we dilute our identity to accept anyone who wishes to join us because we are desperate for new members? Will we risk engaging each other in discussion when our individual behavior threatens to compromise what we corporately stand for? Will we allow alternate modes of identification with our particular charisms the freedom to develop? For example, can we encourage and support our associates to create their particular way of being in mission with us, or will we define them ourselves in a manner

that serves to clone ourselves rather than to give expression to new ways for married and single women and men to commit to our charism?

Groups with a clear sense of identity do not need to control the outcome; they are comfortable in the unfolding process. On the other hand, congregations that lack clarity of identity are likely to have alternate modes of connection that are predicated more on personal attachments to vowed members than on commitment to the mission as lived in fidelity to the charism of the institute. Such associate programs and volunteer programs continue to falter, even after years of existence.

ACCOUNTABILITY VS. AUTONOMY

Community as a means toward mission is built on adult relationships of candor and honesty among people who call each other sister or brother. Increasingly, more of us are plumbing unexplored depths of trust with one another, and as we do so, we are opening new ways of holding ourselves accountable to each other. I believe that we are ready to acknowledge that community holds the potential for becoming sacrament to our earth—an action of grace in a terribly broken world. A yearning for deeper expressions of community, through which we are loved and challenged, is surfacing among us. We sense that the transformation of our world and the conversion of our lives depend on a network of loving relationships that makes risk-taking possible. We long to enter more totally into the heart of mission. I believe that we are addressing our fears of the consequences of such ongoing conversion because we are not facing those fears alone. Community is essential for transformation. Transformation is about conversion, and conversion extends a terrifying yet wondrous invitation to enter more totally into the Paschal event. We are living it: we have committed ourselves to transformative community, and we are willing to take radical action to intensify it—not simply for its own sake but for the sake of the poor, the oppressed, and the exploited of this earth. We hold ourselves accountable, and we hold one another accountable, because our world needs us. We each know all too well that we extinguish energy when we succumb to the pull of our culture toward self-sufficient individualism and autonomy with little or no accountability. When this becomes normative—when individualism and self-interest supersede our commitment to the common good—we are certainly in danger of facing communal extinction.

I recently read a statistic indicating that there has been a substantial increase in the number of religious who are living alone or with no other members of the congregation. I must ask myself, What

does this say? Why is this happening now? What might it mean for our future if this pattern continues? It is a curious trend for me to grapple with because it intensifies my felt experience of a lack of certainty about the future. At the same time, the trend challenges us to engage in a probing conversation that will open new windows of insight. How do we wish to be with one another in community tomorrow? What is the new that seeks birth? Can we speak to one another nondefensively and nonjudgmentally about these things? Just how far are we willing to go in order to rid ourselves of the grip of individualism today? Speaking at this level with one another is far healthier and more productive than rushing to judgments about the quality (or lack thereof) of one's religious life.

These difficult questions call us into the unknown. We do know, however, that we need one another in compassionate care and understanding. We know that individualism kills our communal energy and makes any collective ministerial focus impossible to realize.

CANDOR ON MATTERS OF THE HEART

Candid conversation is a sign of life and light and energy among us. More and more, we are daring to speak to one another about matters of serious consequence. We are venturing into faith sharing that invites us to share how we pray, how we image God, what struggles and suffering we experience as we strive to be men and women of faith. We are taking the risk of acknowledging to one another our shadows, which tempt us toward judgmentalism, overcaution, and stereotyping. We are approaching each other for forgiveness and reconciliation. Perhaps more than ever, we are longing for connection with one another in order to counter the social alienation that is so much a part of our postmodern world. We know that living side-by-side is simply not enough; we long to connect heart-to-heart. This deep desire impels us to relinquish autonomy freely, to move away from individualism and materialism, for the sake of responding to the cries of the world. It is in this context that the vows make sense.

We extinguish the intellectual and spiritual illumination that such conversation brings when we no longer pray with one another, when we allow our struggles with differing expressions and images of God to silence us in one another's presence. We promote the confusion and terror of alienation when we allow personal faith struggles to be relegated to silence or when we judge one another's fidelity by some pharisaic standard known only to ourselves. We drain life from our communities when we can no longer

As religious, we reflect the fragmentation, strain, and chaos of contemporary society—and we hold an incredible power, through vibrant communities in mission, to catalyze society's healing

break bread together—when the centrality of the Paschal event is lost in the confusion and pain of patriarchal structures, and we can no longer gather as a community of faith around a common table. Today we are faced with serious challenges at the level of spirituality and faith. We cannot allow ourselves to be silent with one another as we walk together through the pain of these times as women and men in and of the church.

Community has meaning when we dare to live in heart-to-heart connection with one another. It has meaning when it frees us to respond in union to those who are dispossessed and terrified. A halfhearted, watered-down, comfortable, secure life in the mainstream is simply not enough to hold many of us in community much longer. The light has been snuffed out, and with it the meaning.

What conversations will we dare to have with one another in the days to come? Will we dare to talk about the intimate and vulnerable moments when we have risked loving, risked relating, risked entering into the contemplative posture of profound union with our God or with a friend? Will we dare to utter our struggles with belief and meaning and worth and value? Will we dare to believe that no matter what, we will be carried in the hearts of those who are our sisters or brothers?

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND SYNERGY

In the midst of the reaching out in mission and the attraction toward life in communion, we face the

enormous challenge of managing the increasing expressions and degrees of conflict that characterize any institution in the midst of radical transformation. As life becomes more highly energized, and as its course becomes more frighteningly clear in the face of the gospel mandate, conflict inevitably increases. We are not dealing as well as we might with this area of our life. We tend to avoid conflict or allow our differences to become sources of fragmentation and division. Like the world in which we live, we witness—and often participate in—the destructive power of conflict not well managed. The future will neither be forged nor created if we allow simplistic understandings of consensus to cover over differences of insight, experience, and opinion. We dare not settle for a resolution we can all “live with” if it is one for which we all lack passion.

Both the world community and our own communities are in desperate need of models for sustaining creative conflict. What if we were to foster conflictual interchange? What if we gave up the phrase “conflict resolution”? What if we gathered our healthiest, brightest, and most open women and men of differing opinions and set them to work on some of the serious issues facing us? The very thought of that may weaken our knees. But what if we could move beyond trying to convince each other to think as we do? What if we could move away from winning an argument or settling for a compromise? What if we refused to allow our conflictual interchanges to become personalized? What if we refused to stop a deliberation until we had arrived at the surprise of synergy?

Synergy happens when we are stunned by a previously unimagined resolution to a complex dilemma that has arisen from information overload and from the incredible energy that inhabits chaos. It happens when we are willing to commit ourselves to living in the messiness of the unknown and the potentially unknowable. Synergistic surprises emerge as chaos reveals to us its inherent and exquisite order, which our eyes had not previously been able to discern.

As we identify the serious challenges that face us these days, we must be willing to foster the disequilibrium that comes from staying in the confusion and the fray. Not to do so places us at risk. If we quell the conflict, superficially patching together serious differences without sufficient energetic conversation—if we “resolve” conflict in a facile manner designed to remove us from spirited interchange—we obviate the possibility of synergy. We de-energize and dispirit one another. In organizational arenas, this sets the stage for institutional decay.

What if, instead, capitalizing on our experience as religious, we participated in the creation of new modes of conflict management, through which power

and domination were replaced by reverent celebration of differences and faithful commitment to the process, wonder, and creativity of the chaotic moment? What might we model?

HEALING SOCIETAL RIFTS

When we commit to managing conflict, we enter the realm of bridge building. As religious, we reflect the fragmentation, strain, and chaos of contemporary society—and we concurrently hold an incredible power, through vibrant communities in mission, to catalyze society's healing. Congregations that commit to a mission of healing will enter the next century with vibrancy. Such a commitment calls us to uncomfortable places of disunity and pain, where we must act with courage to heal rifts between genders, races, cultures, and social classes in society as well as in our church. If we shrink from conflict and confrontation, or if our rage erupts in aggressive destruction, or if defensiveness stifles communication, we have allowed ourselves to be compromised and co-opted by our culture and have not freed ourselves to heal it.

We are surrounded by the escalating catastrophes of nationalism and separatism. One group defines itself as superior to another; uses power and domination to try to control it, subdue it, or destroy it; and refuses to communicate with it. We witness such acts of absolute disregard every day—between rich, powerful nations and economically poor countries, between men and women, between Caucasians and persons of color, between clergy and religious, between heterosexuals and homosexuals. What if we were to commit ourselves to promoting dialogue and increased mutual understanding, to establishing common ground, to refusing to allow rage to control the outcome? What if we exercised the fundamental role of leadership: to promote unity? Into what areas of our world and our church might such a commitment take us? Would we dare to go there together?

As we address these questions together, solidarity transforms us; the spirit of mercy and truth enlightens us; a fiery mass of great energy is emitted; light

issues forth from us and extends outward, bending toward those parts of our world that suffer in alienation and despair; and we know in our hearts that it is right that we are one, that we are sisters and brothers to one another and to all whom we meet.

CHALLENGES FACING US

- Clarification of communal identity and boundaries, as these inform the living out of our particular charisms.
How might we deepen our communal identity in mission today?
- Deepening accountability in mission and a movement away from autonomous individualism.
What is it about accountability in community that makes us uncomfortable sometimes?
- Candid communication on “matters of the heart.”
What conversations would you love to have the courage to share with the members of your community?
- Developing the ability to manage conflict as a means toward intensifying communal bonds and arriving at creative actions that spring from synergy.
In what ways does conflict cause you discomfort?
- Active commitment to building bridges across chasms of diversity and healing serious societal rifts.
Into what areas of our world, our church, might such a commitment take us?



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Complaints About Treatment in Religious Communities

David B. Couturier, O.F.M., Cap.

Newly elected leaders are often surprised at how quickly their “honeymoon period” comes to an end. The euphoria of new hope and the celebration of new possibilities that emerged during their election process are often replaced by unanticipated negative comments from members. Even when new leaders sincerely try their best to listen to the concerns of their constituency and endeavor to understand the context of institutional problems, they often find themselves unexpectedly facing comments that charge them with mistreating members and misrepresenting the community’s needs.

How do such perceptions of unfair treatment emerge in a religious community? How do religious attend to them? What are the psychological and social dynamics that hasten and fuel these impressions? Even if unfounded, these perceptions are powerful, and they can stick to an administration and become part of a community’s unconscious agenda. Ignoring perceptions of unfair treatment because they are objectively unfounded misses the point and can be a fatal mistake for an administration trying to achieve important new goals.

Too often, religious leaders dismiss these perceptions as unavoidable grouching by the inevitably malcontented. They miss the valuable data these perceptions hold about the tasks of the community, the anxiety in the group, and the hosts of organizational resistances marshaled against meeting the community’s challenges. If religious leaders confront these perceptions only on an individual basis, they will miss their important structural features.

PERSONAL DYNAMICS OF UNFAIR TREATMENT

The perception of unfair treatment emerges in a religious community in two ways: first, as part of the personal dynamics of individuals (with the attendant social dynamics of cooperation and communication), and second, as part of the structural dynamics of an organization.

Let us begin with an exploration of the personal dynamics. All our perceptions of the world are products of our attention and our interpretations. What we imagine or believe about the world outside us comes from the cognitive and affective structures within, which help us attend to and interpret our experiences. In *Entering and Leaving Vocation: Intrapsychic Dynamics*, Luigi M. Rulla and coauthors note that studies on the psychological dynamics of religious indicate that the values, attitudes, and needs that we bring with us into religious life influence our perceptions of the experiences we have in religious life. These studies demonstrate that if there is a fundamental consistency between what we value and need in life and if our attitudes support our values, we are more likely to interpret our experiences with others objectively. On the other hand, if our proclaimed values collide with our psychological needs, especially at an unconscious level, we are more likely to misinterpret our own experiences, misjudge the intentions of others, and protect ourselves with increasingly defensive behaviors.

For example, an individual who experiences an underlying conflict between a value to sacrifice for others and a mostly unconscious need to seek the easy way out of difficult situations will inevitably defend himself or herself from this inconsistency. This is so because the troubling need, while a powerful motivation, remains beyond one's conscious appropriation. Often, we ward off the anxiety of conversion faced in challenging situations by misunderstanding the event, misrepresenting the circumstances, blaming others, or avoiding personal accountability—and all of this in good faith. Such is the power of the unconscious! In *Psychological Structure and Vocation*, Rulla and colleagues write that this troubling dynamic occurs in 60 to 80 percent of religious. Fortunately, it is quite treatable.

Perceptions of unfair treatment are more likely to appear when we allow ourselves to be fooled by our own inconsistent patterns of religious motivations. When we do not regularly attend to the powerful interplay of values and needs, both consciously and unconsciously, we are likely to misinterpret the motivations of others and misread our own responsibilities. Religious leaders can manage this type of perception by understanding how inconsistent patterns emerge and by patiently working through the defenses we create when our needs are threatened. Healthy and patient communication can alleviate much of the frustration that attends these misunderstandings.

But there is another, more serious personal dynamic of misunderstanding that affects religious communities. At its most troubling extreme, perceptions of unfair treatment can emerge from psychological dynamics that are not only inconsistent but also primitive and unhealthy. A small percentage of members of religious communities constantly feel unjustly treated. They charge abuse at every turn and complain repeatedly about transgressions made against them by every administration. These men and women are hypervigilant for evidence of unjust treatment and constantly on the defensive in the presence of authority figures. They become suspicious toward old friends who have assumed the mantle of authority. These people are usually well known in the community for their grudges. Their complaints are more than occasional annoyances; they seem to be part of their personality structure. Complaint has become a lifestyle and an attitude that protects them from outside interference. Such religious are usually difficult to assign because few healthy members of the community want to endure their constant sniping.

The strategy of these individuals is to keep the leader on the defensive and to maintain their special interests exactly as they have constructed them. Leaders often find themselves afraid of these members

and reluctant to come up against their powerful impact on the community. Sober analysis suggests that their perceptions of unfair treatment are part of a serious psychological syndrome of paranoid and obsessive thinking. Their complaints are debilitating symptoms that warrant psychological attention and sometimes biochemical intervention. Chronic, global, and unfocused complaints of unfair treatment may be indicators of underlying biological, physical, and psychiatric disease. Uncharacteristic shifts toward such complaints, in both young and elderly members of the community, may signal a serious medical condition that needs immediate attention.

STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS OF UNFAIR TREATMENT

The perception of unfair treatment emerges not only from the personal dynamics of individuals but also from the structural or organizational dynamics of an institution. How a group (as a group) understands its mission, accomplishes its tasks, and organizes its work influences the perceptions of members and the development of anxiety in the group. This is a new level of analysis for many communities.

Not long ago, we looked at our religious institutions as amazingly stable and fixed. We used the biblical image of rock to highlight the cohesive unity and almost automatic permanence of religious institutions. Today, the alternative biblical image of the people of God allows us to admit the fluidity, developmental flexibility, and nonrational dimension of the group experience.

We are increasingly aware that our religious institutions function on two levels: the rational and the nonrational. While our constitutions may define the proper limits of our responsibilities, experience reminds us that the actual psychological and social situation of accountabilities in religious communities is more complex. Because religious institutions also function at a nonrational level, we realize that we interpret our experiences both cognitively and affectively and that our assumptions are developed correctly and incorrectly. Impressions of an organization and its operations develop rationally and nonrationally.

Perceptions of unfair treatment can also emerge because religious communities have an amazingly diverse array of experiences and wildly divergent assumptions about the meaning, direction, and priorities of community life. Although many communities have experienced shared assemblies and open chapters, these events do not guarantee that initiatives are interpreted similarly by members. As I noted in a recent article in the *CMSM (Conference of Major Superiors of Men) Forum*, people interpret consensus in multiple ways. Community members inhabit vastly

different cultures of formation that allow them to interpret and act on their social and ministerial worlds according to different patterns of expectations and assumptions. The shared history of a group is received differently and with competing interpretations. The complex changes emerging in community call for analysis and interpretation. They need a shared vision and mutual commitment for appropriate action. We find, however, that our religious organizations produce, share, and use anxiety in the development of tasks.

All organizations have difficult work to do, and that work causes anxiety—because work in an institution involves real risks (of success or failure) and substantial challenges (of input and output), both to the group and to the individuals who work in it. To meet these challenges, individuals assume specific roles that help them identify their task and negotiate the work they must do with others. Thus, organizations appear to be rational entities with clearly defined responsibilities, neat organizational charts, and proper job descriptions. However, on closer inspection, it becomes evident that they are constantly displaying and producing anxiety as members try to adapt to challenges and face up to the regressive pull to avoid them.

Larry Hirschorn, author of *The Workplace Within: The Psychological Dynamics of Organizational Life*, has identified five important dynamics in organizations that can influence the perception of unfair treatment:

- Organizations have difficult tasks to accomplish, and this causes anxiety, which is the root of distorted relationships and unfounded perceptions.
- A work group manages its anxiety by developing various “social defenses”—group-sanctioned behaviors and rituals that help the group members retreat from their primary task and mission.
- These social defenses are protective and frequently create distorted relationships both inside and outside the institution. These distortions relieve the group of its anxiety about having to get difficult tasks done and create unrealistic pictures of the world and its needs outside the institution. The group develops rituals, in the form of policies and procedures, to manage its anxiety and protect the status quo.
- People in organizations will sometimes use primitive processes of scapegoating and projection to contain their anxiety, especially if faced with the uncertainties of major cultural upheaval.
- The real development of a group happens when group members face their primary task, meet their challenge, and stop using others within and outside the institution to manage their shared anxiety.

STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS OF MISUNDERSTANDING

Religious communities are once again experiencing profound changes. Unable to stall a generation-long vocation shortage, the escalating health care demands of an aging population, the increasing ministerial challenges of a global and professional society, and their own shrinking financial resources, religious communities are searching for new ways to come together to decide on core priorities for the future. They face the challenge of developing a leaner and more focused future based on a shared vision and mutual accountability. Nevertheless, it appears that religious communities are having a difficult time forging common ground and a shared commitment base. They are interpreting their shared history according to the diverse and competing formational cultures in which they have been trained.

We can identify seven cultures of formation among groups in religious life, and each of these cultures represents a distinctive cluster of beliefs, emotions, and rituals. These varying cultural patterns of understanding and affect help religious interpret their reality differently and provide distinct models for acting in the world. This diversity gives religious life a richness of perspective that was not apparent just a generation ago. At the same time, it also creates the potential for serious misunderstandings between leaders and members about priorities, initiatives, and beliefs central to a shared religious life. Let us explore these different structural dynamics.

Religious trained in an *essentialist culture of formation* were taught, and continue to maintain, that the primary task of religious life is the sanctification of their souls and the faithful transmission of the essential principles of Christian doctrine. Developed in a period of church apologetics, this powerful culture holds that a member's primary theological responsibility is the faithful transmission of Christian revelation and tradition, especially as developed in the Neoscholastic school of thought. Members of this culture display unquestioning loyalty to the institutions of the church and expect order and a clarity of mind and will consistent with what they believe to be the world's natural order of perfection. Trained in a hierarchically ordered cosmology, they expect the ascendance of grace over nature, of mind over body, and of the common good over self-interest.

At convocations, assemblies, chapters, and house meetings, this group expects to hear an explicit rendering of “what the church teaches”—that is, the clear and ordered directives of the hierarchical church and the magisterium, and the explicit mandates of religious superiors—before committing themselves to action. Essentialists are not used to,

and often seem uncomfortable in, the messy world of “dialogue” and “shared faith.” They find group discussions disruptive, rambling, and chaotic. A group vote rarely holds the same weight as an explicit directive from religious leadership. Their literature, rituals, and interpretations remain much as they were before the Second Vatican Council. They continue to be faithful, pious, spiritual, devotional, and extremely loyal members of their communities. However, they organize their worlds according to the lessons of order, precedence, status, sacrifice, discipline, and self-control of their early training. This culture is internally coherent and represents a distinctive system for understanding and acting in the world. One trained in this culture who has found religious meaning and spiritual comfort is not likely to change to an alternate culture, however attractive or new.

Compare that to the *existentialist culture of formation*. This culture begins not with the faithful transmission of doctrines but with the promotion of human and spiritual maturity in the lives of individual religious. The Council’s anthropological “turn toward the subject” and the emphasis placed on the people of God strongly influenced this culture. Individuals trained in it were encouraged to become self-reflective and personally responsible for their own development. Today they value sincerity, personal growth, and authenticity as starting points for mature discussion of church matters. Their commitment to authenticity allows them to see through patterns of community behavior that are self-serving. This group has fought long and hard to develop foundations for personal maturity against a backdrop of intense religious conformity. It roots the religious project in a secure personal understanding and appropriation of the implications of gospel living.

To the casual observer, these existentialists may seem excessively absorbed with their own growth and maturity needs. They often seem to have little patience for the construction of a shared vision and mutual responsibility for the future of the community. At meetings, they are likely to be satisfied with garnering the personal meaning and individual import of discussions and may fail to negotiate a compromise with others in the group. It is enough for them that individuals find their own way in religion. Their exclusive concentration on personal needs keeps them from seeing the social context of those needs. They recognize that an individual’s authority comes from a repertoire of personal and free choices. However, they have difficulty developing successful interactions with other cultural groups in the community.

Religious trained in a *socialization culture of formation* enter discussions with the conviction that the first step toward authentic spiritual maturity is not

personal insight but the construction of an authentic social bond between members. With the realization that discernment is a communal act of faith, this group holds that it must form an authentic social bond in order to create the necessary and sufficient conditions for a proper discernment of spirits. They listen for the voice of God speaking in and through all the members and all the experiences of the community. This culture views responsibility and leadership differently from the other cultures we have discussed. Its norms require dialogue, the sharing of ideas, mutual accountability, and the convergence of energy for a proper understanding and reflection of the community’s needs and priorities. The sole judgment of a religious superior is not enough. One can see that an essentialist religious, who values conformity of heart and mind to the voice of God expressed in the explicit will of a superior, would find the emphasis on consensus confusing, disturbing, or just irrelevant. This judgment, however, increases the socialization group’s perception of being unfairly treated. Reducing the issue to personality dynamics or judging individual motives would be irrelevant to the structural dynamics at play. Healthy religious of goodwill can misunderstand each other’s positions because they fail to appreciate the distinct patterns of assumptions, beliefs, and emotions developing in religious life.

Religious trained in the *behavioral culture of formation* have a more practical, action-oriented, “just do it” mentality. For them, authority is neither exclusively above them, within them, nor between them. The simple fiat of an authority figure will not assure the authenticity of God’s voice; nor will personal experiences, however authentic; nor will mere group consensus. It comes through rigorous and continuous research into the behavioral and social conditions of religious action.

NEW CULTURES APPEARING

Three new cultures of formation are emerging as alternatives within religious life, each with a distinctive pattern of beliefs and affect. The *neoessentialist culture* values discipline and emphasizes the importance and the return of strong leadership in the church. Members are principled and sure about what they expect from the church, yet they are different from their conservative predecessors in some important ways. Like their essentialist sponsors, they value order, strong leadership, and clear principles. However, they lack the sure familial, social, and religious bonding that their elders could take for granted. While they are quite sure about what principles they want others to abide by, they can be quite flexible when it comes to what they themselves will commit

to. It should be remembered that they have inherited the features of all the cultures that preceded them. This gives the group a unique and sometimes paradoxical characteristic: strong institutional values paired with a flexible self-discipline.

The *liberation culture of formation* has developed from a conscious conviction about the priority of God's preferential love for the poor and the priority of justice as a precondition for the exchange of faith. This culture places a great emphasis on developing a social analysis of the conditions that lead to unfair practices in society and the community of faith. Its rituals and prayer center on the powerful reputation of God as universal love. That reputation is at stake in every act of injustice that is tolerated or ignored. The liberationists are more likely than their predecessors to be outwardly critical of unjust structures within society and the church, a habit that impresses other religious as disloyal to the institution of the church. Discussions that do not focus on the inclusion of God's poor at the common table of creation and redemption leave many members of this group feeling disenfranchised or ignored. More than that, it leaves them feeling irresponsible and like "unjust stewards" in the face of enormous human suffering.

Finally, there is a new but small class of entrants into religious life: second-career individuals who come to religious life with established careers and life choices made as adults. This *professional culture of formation* consists of men and women who enter religious life with established identities, secure careers, a network of adult social bonds, a history of obligations, and a wide set of adult accountabilities. This is the first generation of religious who did not forge their adult identities within religious community. Their experience of supervision in American corporations informs their view of adult obedience—a view that values personal initiative, creative entrepreneurship, and cross-functional teamwork. The loose standards of cooperation evidenced in some existentially based projects often shock religious from a professional culture of mutual accountability and personal creativity. The demands of nonreflective conformity expected of them by essentialist colleagues also dismay them. They search for evidence of a creative risk-taking in religion that corresponds to the entrepreneurship of their secular professional culture.

MANAGING STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS

Personality dynamics, especially inconsistent values and needs, can lead religious to misinterpret each other's motives and misrepresent each other's positions. However, as already noted, the perception of unfair treatment may also be rooted in an institution's

diverse patterns of assumptions, beliefs, affect, and rituals. A group that does not recognize how powerful and distinct these patterns are will perpetuate misunderstanding, encourage the perception of unfair treatment, and miss a valuable opportunity to understand the group's underlying challenges.

Each of the aforementioned cultures reads different texts that support its cultural values. The rituals of community life that support one set of religious beliefs are not easily translated into the rituals of another group. This can lead to polarization. A religious leader who frames an initiative or procedural change in the language and ritual of one formational culture runs the risk of alienating other groups who do not understand the message or do not find the initiative helpful in the development of their own spiritual journeys. For example, a religious leader who uses essentialist language (of order, perfection, status, and hierarchy) to describe needed changes in the community runs the risk of alienating a large segment of the provincial population who no longer think, act, feel, or behave according to the logic of that language. At the same time, a religious leader who never frames his thought in essentialist terms can foster the impression among this group of religious that their interests are being ignored and their needs overlooked. There are six steps a religious leader can take to manage the structural dynamics of misunderstanding:

Understand your own culture of formation and its limits. Religious leaders must be clear about their own preferred culture of formation. They should know and accept their own assumptions, beliefs, and rituals of religious life development. At the same time, leaders should recognize the limits of their own preferred culture and understand that there are legitimate alternatives for renewal. The more aware and accepting they are of differences in assumptions and rituals, the less likely they are to trample on the expectations and rituals of others. It is important that leaders recognize that other cultures of religious life exist and that they represent legitimate expressions of church renewal.

Distinguish between personal dynamics and structural dynamics of misunderstanding. Religious leaders should not assume that every misunderstanding or complaint of unfair treatment should be attributed to a personality clash between a leader and a member of the community. People experience a sense of unfair treatment when important rituals are minimized, religious beliefs are trivialized, and the emotions that surround religious experiences are ridiculed. An essentialist who has found God in the rituals of order, status, and self-

discipline ought not to be ridiculed by those who presume to have a more modern expression of religion. At the same time, religious from the professional culture, who have found God within the sometimes chaotic and messy world of dialogue, personal creativity, and adult intimacies, ought not to be dismissed simply because their experience is unlike any we have seen before in religious life. Each culture should be respected and appreciated as a distinct and internally coherent pattern of religious beliefs, affect, rituals, and actions.

Encourage opportunities whereby religious share their cultural expressions of religious formation with one another. Religious leaders should provide safe opportunities for members to share the rich diversity of religious expressions within the community. Unfortunately, a quiet polarization seems to have seeped into religious life; members of one culture of formation rarely interact in any meaningful way with members of other cultures. We must be reminded that each culture provides an important perspective on growth in faith through unity, maturity, community, action, justice, leadership, and creativity. Each expression can add to the rich mosaic of religious life that is emerging in our time. Religious leaders should use every available occasion to expose members to the various cultures that give meaning to so many religious. They should discourage the attitude that there is only one true way to religious meaning and only one valid expression of religious life renewal.

Review policies and procedures for formational culture biases. Religious leaders naturally construct initiatives, policies, and procedures within the cultural frames in which they feel most at home. A leader trained in the socialization culture of formation will naturally express his or her thoughts through the language and affect of dialogue, shared responsibility, and mutual accountability. Yet these initiatives might have more impact if they were also shaped with the needs, interests, rituals, and assumptions of other groups. Religious leaders should review past policies and procedures to determine which are constructed exclusively on one set of assumptions. They should also promote a cross-fertilization of ideas when building community events so that shared events actually represent the broad spectrum of rituals available in the community.

Use perceptions of unfair treatment as diagnostic tools. As we have seen, such perceptions can emerge from confusion of assumptions and divergence over rituals. They can serve as fairly accurate diagnostic tools for leaders who want to understand the community's stance regarding developments and future

priorities. Perceptions of unfair treatment erupt from a shared anxiety in the group. This anxiety (now coded in the language of injustice) indicates that groups in the community do not understand or share the assumptions underlying the directive. It may also signal that the group is unable to understand the importance of the project because it is framed in a ritual of activities or a language of beliefs that is foreign to them. Perceptions of unfair treatment signal that more work needs to be done if the whole body is to share the work together.

Review how roles are assumed in religious communities. The mission of a community is accomplished when the primary task of the group is understood and when members are clear about their roles and have the appropriate authority to accomplish their ministries. The multiple cultures of formation, with their diverse languages and rituals, often present confusing impressions of expectations and responsibilities. Religious leaders should review role assignments in the province to determine how these roles have been constructed (in which cultural frame) and to negotiate a proper fit between the implicit cultural frame of the ministry and the cultural frame of the minister. Often, we assign members from one culture of formation to a ministry established in another culture and wonder why the fit is uneven and the task difficult to accomplish. This does not mean that an individual from one culture ought not to be assigned to a ministry in another. It does, however, mean that appropriate skill development is needed to help both the minister and the ministry in the transitional experience.

RECOMMENDED READING

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Curing Group Paralysis

Mary Jo Moran, H.M., Ph.D.

Generally energized by groups, I am especially frustrated when I run into the problematic aspects of group life. Having lived in many diverse groups, I often find my feelings about my lived experience oscillating between contentment and despair. Working with groups professionally, I have found myself puzzled at times with groups that seem to be paralyzed. Therefore, I have a personal and professional interest in learning how to manage moments of frustration, hostility, compromise, slowness, and standstill.

While highlighting conflict, this article focuses on groups that are immobilized and unable to do their work. I will identify some major dynamics that seem to paralyze or hinder group members, the group as a whole, and the relations among groups in the accomplishment of their goals. I will also suggest some possibilities for reframing these problems so that the group can gain some momentum and continue with its tasks.

CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

What hinders a group in its efforts to accomplish its task? Why are some groups extremely effective and others extremely dysfunctional? What accounts for the difference between a successful group and an in-

effective one? If a group is not working well, how can it be assisted so that it can achieve its ends?

These questions challenge us as we struggle to work together. Their importance is increasing because our world is becoming infinitely smaller as we become more intimately connected with our brothers and sisters in the global village. The importance of people being able to come together to accomplish a common task in an effective way becomes more critical with the passing of each day. However, the complexities that result when different people come together and struggle with the ideas and emotions related to both their tasks and their relationships with one another are innumerable and intricate. Consequently, learning how to work together productively continues to challenge and sometimes elude us.

If a group is healthy and well-functioning, it grows and changes while expanding its cohesiveness and functionality. It also expands its capacity to assist individual members in specific ways. This requires attention to both the group's growth and its maintenance. Group styles can be productive and beneficial, resulting in high-quality solutions to which members are committed—or they can be negative and overwhelming, leading to solutions of marginal quality and acceptance.

REFRAMING PROBLEMS

In *Paradoxes of Group Life: Understanding Conflict, Paralysis, and Movement in Group Dynamics*, Kenwyn K. Smith and David N. Berg, associate professors of organizational behavior at the Wharton School (University of Pennsylvania) and the Yale School of Organization and Management, respectively, observe that

(1) a great deal of energy seems to be invested in getting groups ‘unstuck,’ even though it is not always obvious what produced the paralysis in the first place; (2) the very people who desire change often act in ways that reinforce the things they want altered; (3) relationships in decline continue to deteriorate while each party waits stubbornly for the other to make the first move; and (4) groups keep themselves enmeshed in paralyzing “we-they” dynamics despite their expressed interest in wanting to avoid such problems.

One common phenomenon in groups that are stuck is conflict that splits individuals, the relationships among individuals, or the group as a whole into opposing sides. The group, often polarized, seeks *the* correct solution to its difficulties. Sometimes the process of finding such a solution is the impetus for sustaining the conflict, because some group members believe that there is only one way to approach a solution.

In order to deal with conflict in this day and age, it is imperative that members of a group and the group as a whole consciously work at reframing their thinking by discarding a dualistic paradigm that focuses on only one end of the issue and adhering to one that encompasses both ends of whatever polarity the group is struggling to resolve. Certainly, neither end of the polarity is entirely positive or entirely negative.

The ability to reframe a situation or issue becomes as important as the experience itself because reframing significantly alters reality in the sphere of interactions. Certainly, some of a group’s experiences of conflict are the result of its thinking processes. Hence, these processes must be attended to if the conflict is to be managed, because the conflict is situated not in the particular issue over which it arose but rather in the systems of thinking operative in the group.

If a group is paralyzed, how it thinks about regaining its ability to move will reveal the frames it is utilizing, which are in part responsible for the paralysis. Examining these frames is critical to understanding the entrapping dynamics within any one frame. We can frame any situation in a multitude of ways, and it consequently can have multiple meanings, “each meaning being a consequence of the relationship between the frame and the event,” in the words of Smith and Berg.

VIEWING CONFLICT POSITIVELY

Contrary to the current and popular description of conflict in terms of different interests, values, goals, and so on, Smith and Berg believe that “how a group thinks about its experiences of conflict both gives that conflict its meaning and sets the parameters for possible courses of action.” Whether the group views conflict as antagonistic and hostile or natural and healthy will definitely influence how it will act as differences among members arise. In addition, individuals within a group may frame their experience of conflict with these descriptors or others, thus generating more differences within the group. Thus, the conflict takes on multiple and contradictory meanings for the group’s members

The group then becomes unable to act because solutions available by applying one frame of reference are unavailable to those with a different frame of reference. To regain movement, the group must redefine the conflict without getting caught in the trap of using itself as a mirror through which it acknowledges only the parts of itself that authenticate what it wants to know—that is, the parts that will ensure that it remains essentially as it wants to be.

Consequently, how we think about conflict is as important as the actual experience of it. Ordinarily, a group spends a great deal of time and energy dealing with its polarities. However, as Smith and Berg note, each tactic for terminating conflict “becomes a stimulus for a new set of group tensions, with sides often being taken over whether the discord should be confronted or ignored. As group members describe their efforts to conquer conflict, they seem to tell a story of being conquered by it.”

While both sides of a polarity are separate and distinct, they also are united like Siamese twins—joined in such a way that their lives depend on each other. One side of the polarity does not exist without the other. At the same time, the expression of one side is also the expression of both, since it is the contrast with the other that gives each side its meaning. The necessity of seeing the connection between polar opposites is extremely important because paradox results when we experience not only the contradictory forces but also the connection between them. If, as a result of sensing the paradox, we sever the connection between the contradictory forces, we transform the paradox into conflict. We may then incessantly review the issues of the conflict without ever considering the fundamental dynamics.

The belief in resolution and how to arrive at it produces complex difficulties within a group. The days of resolving conflict between and among individuals and groups are over. Today, it is essential that we

grow in our ability to manage conflict and maybe even allow it to enrich our lives.

HEALTHY VS. UNHEALTHY CONFLICT

Conflict can be not only energizing, creative, natural, and healthy, but also unhealthy, draining, and nonproductive. Healthy conflict occurs when we have an obvious sense of self-differentiation and some self-awareness. If managed effectively, it can also be a source of connection among group members or between group members and the group as a whole. Conflict is not a result of projecting onto others issues that we are unable to confront within ourselves; rather, conflict emerges when there is a definite sense of disagreement about something.

A “win-win” rather than a “win-lose” situation is the result of healthy conflict, and all involved feel good about the experience. Conflict among individuals and within groups is as natural and necessary to healthy and productive functioning as is cooperation. However, if a group perceives itself as continually plagued by conflict, chances are that the group’s efficiency and ability to solve its own problems will be impaired. In addition, a group that works to deny or expel differences or insists that responsibility for those differences be borne by an individual or subgroup is likely to become stuck.

If each of us is willing to be ourself, it is only to be expected that we will agree on some things and disagree on others. If we move on those differences, we will be in conflict. However, conflict that is dealt with openly and honestly can be productive and life-giving to a group.

FACING CONFLICT ESSENTIAL

Most often, unfortunately, groups and individuals strenuously avoid dealing with their differences in the open, and this causes a great number of problems. These groups and individuals interact with each other only when absolutely required to do so, and then only in cautious and restrained ways. Consequently, they lose opportunities for creative changes in relationships and invest group energy in denying differences rather than energizing those involved. While conflict tends to make most people at least a little uncomfortable, individuals who simply observe it tend to experience much greater anxiety than those actually involved.

Our fantasies of what might happen if a group’s differences were addressed directly are usually vague and unreal. A third party can help by asking each member to state his or her most serious fears and encouraging them to be as specific as possible. Exploring each other’s reluctance can sometimes lead to

readiness to engage in confronting differences if those involved attain a more realistic perspective of their own fears and hopes and consequently gain a sense of potency they did not have before.

With a conscious awareness of conflict, both parties can respond flexibly and creatively rather than be limited by polar responses that are generally restricted and predictable. Brittleness in behavioral response to conflict is a result of duality; all issues are “either/or,” and the concept of “both/and” is foreign. Just as each individual has contradictory emotions, thoughts, and feelings, so too does each group. And just as each person struggles to reconcile these inner contradictions, so too does each group. At the intrapersonal level, resolution is the result of owning the contradictions and not obliterating part of who one is. Likewise, a group must own the contradictory and opposing forces within it.

CONFRONTING INNER POLARITIES

In order to be seriously engaged in our personal growth, we must own those aspects of ourselves of which we do not approve. One result of this personal work can be the ability to engage in more productive conflict experiences with others. Confronting the polarities within ourselves is hard and lonely work. It is certainly much easier to project those disowned parts of ourselves onto others and to blame them for being “that way.” However, this denial of what is an essential part of our being impoverishes us individually, as well as all with whom we relate. A holistic perspective requires us to become aware of the light and dark within ourselves as a first step in dealing with conflict. This often requires the assistance of therapy. The second step is to take ownership of our experience of the problem so that others involved can listen non-defensively to what we say.

Similarly, group awareness involves knowledge of the shared history of the group, which includes its norms, values, purposes, roles, customary procedures, and so forth. One of the tasks of a group facilitator is to help the group examine its often unconscious processes and decide which contribute to group functioning, which block group functioning, and what might be missing that would assist the group to function better. Also, a facilitator may help the group to examine a specific process that may augment or block functioning, depending on how and when it is used by the group. Therefore, a study of both internal group dynamics (i.e., the processes, issues, and events that ensue with regularity in most small groups) and external or intergroup dynamics (i.e., looking at the group as a component embedded in a larger social context, connected to its environ-

ment through its members and its activities with other groups) is essential if we are to understand what happens in the group and why.

British psychologist Wilfred Bion theorizes that in every group, two groups are present—the work group and the basic assumption group. The work group pursues the real task of the group. It seeks to gain knowledge, to learn from experience, and to achieve its goals. On the other hand, the basic assumption group utilizes the unconscious assumptions of individuals in the group, which give meaning to and interpret the group's behavior to the degree that it is not functioning as a work group. Bion insists that both groups are necessary and that individuals and groups simultaneously interact both consciously and unconsciously and at both the work and assumption levels.

OBSTACLES TO PROGRESS

In *Overcoming Organizational Defenses*, change expert Chris Argyris points out that difficulties result from defensive routines, which he describes as “actions or policies that prevent individuals or segments of the organization from experiencing embarrassment or threat. Simultaneously, they prevent us from identifying and getting rid of the causes of the potential embarrassment or threat. Organizational defensive routines are anti-learning, overprotective, and self-sealing.” Argyris believes that the major role of the organizational mediator or consultant is clearly one of enhancing group awareness through the sharing of previously unspoken thoughts and feelings, and of getting the participants to share and test assumptions. This parallels working with individuals and groups to help them own attitudes and behaviors that they both accept and reject.

Patterns of conflict tend to be circular, repeating themselves over and over. Generally, individuals and groups do not manage conflict; they just fashion a truce. Most of us surrender our talent and creativity in the face of conflict rather than engaging with one another. We avoid talking with each other, and we experience difficulty in listening to one another. In addition, we don't fight fairly or think imaginatively or clearly in a disagreement. Consequently, we often need to engage an intermediary. In *Authentic Management: A Gestalt Orientation to Organizations and Their Development*, Stanley M. Herman and Michael Korenich, management and organization consultants, maintain that “a more thorough and creative exploration generally results if those involved are encouraged (though not pushed) to allow themselves and each other some extravagances, unreasonableness, and even irresponsibility in stating their points of view.” Considering extremes rather than limiting

our thinking to what is reasonable and rational can be a challenge that, if given the opportunity, will serve us well.

In groups, many of us tend to engage in impersonal and theoretical discussions about our differences rather than make personal, explicit statements of needs. However, more often than not, when we are encouraged to discuss at a deeper level than that of clichés and abstractions, the real issues turn out to be our insecurities, lack of trust in each other, or questions of competence rather than our organizational ideology.

Argyris depicts this human tendency to operate at the theoretical level in his four-step ladder of inference. Step one consists of concrete, observable phenomena; step two consists of culturally understood meanings (e.g., agreement about what was communicated during a conversation); step three is the meaning we assign to our experience of step two; and step four is the theory we create to understand the actions of other people in relation to step three. As Argyris writes, his model of inference reveals “that the evaluations or judgments people make automatically are not concrete or obvious. They are abstract and highly inferential. Individuals treat them as if they were concrete because they produce them so automatically that they do not even think that their judgments are highly inferential.”

However, many psychologists and organizational consultants also acknowledge that when the incompatibilities among individuals or between individuals and groups are extreme, all involved may come to recognize those incompatibilities and move in separate directions. It is legitimate and appropriate for us to disagree on occasion, even after a full discussion and engagement. We must address and change the unreality of our expectation that all conflict can be resolved. These days of changing paradigms require that each of us let go of our need to always reach resolution.

WORKING WITH RESISTANCE

In *Organizational Consulting: A Gestalt Approach*, Edwin C. Nevis, an organizational consultant on the faculty of the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, suggests that resistance—one form that conflict assumes in individuals, groups, and organizations—is not just a process of opposition or one-sided reaction. He suggests that “instead it will be much better to refer to any instance where one or more persons do not seem to be “joining” as a manifestation of *multidirected energy*. This term conveys the notion of multiple forces or desires, not all of which support each other, and many of which pull in different directions.”

While this change in terminology may be perceived as a matter of semantics by some, *multidirected energy* conveys dynamic flexibility rather than rigid stability. It also implies participation in a process rather than an all-or-nothing position. In addition, it seems quite in line with replacing our dualistic thinking with the emerging paradigm and is another example of the potency of reframing. Finally, it leads to strategies of working with rather than overcoming or annihilating. Similarly, Smith and Berg, writing in *Paradoxes of Group Life*, maintain that “group change is facilitated by acknowledging and confronting the demands on both sides of the conflict, by exploring and addressing the role of these opposing forces in the group.”

According to Nevis, the paradoxical theory of change “states that a person or system cannot move from one state of being to another until the present state is fully experienced and accepted.” What must be experienced fully before we consider the possibilities of what could be. All our thoughts and feelings associated with the present state need to be articulated and assimilated. Only by respecting the restraining forces can we achieve joining; if we pressure for our position, the opposing side will only solidify, because there is not sufficient room for opposing forces to be balanced with joining forces. All involved in any organizational issue must be helped to see the full meaning of joining and opposing forces. In settings involving a number of people, this entails making space for “the opposition” so that it has at least a comparable amount of time, if not more, to become recognized by all concerned.

PSYCHOLOGY OF CONFLICT

Smith and Berg describe three internal, psychological sources of conflict:

- (1) the bringing together of individuals with different skills, interests, and values for the purpose of fulfilling group tasks that demand a level of variety not available in any single individual;
- (2) the perceptual tendency of individuals and groups toward polarization as a means of ordering and defining reality; and
- (3) the ambivalence of group members toward group-as-whole phenomena and the associated playing out of intrapsychic conflicts in interpersonal ways.

While a group needs people who are different in order to accomplish its tasks, it also needs unity. Differences tend to block unity, however, and unity tends to block the incorporation and integration of people who are different into the group. Researchers have shown that members of groups tend to differentiate themselves along three polar continuums: dominant-submissive, friendly-unfriendly, and instrumentally controlled—emotionally expressive. Finally, each of us not

only desires to belong to a group but also wants to retain his or her individuality and remain apart from the group. Thus, ambivalence about group membership is introduced into the group’s activities. To quote Smith and Berg, “The desire to be separate *and* connected, coupled with the fear that only abandonment or fusion is possible, creates a sense of existential anxiety for all of us at primitive levels of awareness.”

Bion describes this ambivalence in terms of “the individual as a group animal at war.” He postulates that “all groups stimulate and at the same time frustrate the individuals composing them; for the individual is impelled to seek the satisfaction of his needs in his group and is at the same time inhibited in this aim by the primitive fears that the group arouses.” This anxiety is increased as we attempt to manage it by choosing either to be connected or to remain separate. With the choice of one or the other comes an increase in anxiety; consequently, we switch strategies and choose the opposite. When this doesn’t reduce our anxiety, we continue to engage in the chosen strategy more intensely, thinking that doing so will relieve the anxiety. As Smith and Berg write,

Since the experience of anxiety on joining a group is seated in ambivalence not readily accessible to consciousness, when the anxiety is handled in a way that increases it, ambivalence about the danger of either joining or not joining in the group is aroused, activating another oscillating process in the deep structure of the individual: if one invests oneself in the group, it might get really dangerous; on the other hand, if one does not get in there and gain some influence over the group, then everything will always seem out of control. This response increases ambivalence further but brings with it a subtle and significant switch. At the unconscious level, the individual has begun to move the underlying focus from his or her own feelings—that is, processes rooted within—to the emerging judgments about what the group is like.

This process of moving from managing the self to making judgments about the group is called splitting. In group life, one of the results of splitting is that an individual or subgroup carries a particular emotion or position on behalf of the group. A common example of this phenomenon, the scapegoat, is best dealt with by raising the group’s awareness of its exploitation of the scapegoated member in getting its needs expressed.

In addition, splitting may occur by disowning one side of an internal polarity and projecting it onto an “other.” Functioning at both the individual and group level, splitting at one level of a system can become enfolded into another level of that system. Splitting also occurs unconsciously as a group forms subgroups around difficult emotional issues.

Because splitting and projection are normally unconscious processes, members of a group ordinarily approach the onset of conflict by seeking to eliminate one side of the individual or group polar opposite. Thus, we lose sight of the crucial importance of maintaining the common frame that provides expression to the coexistence of the polarity. When we lose our ability to reframe our experience so as to encompass both ends of the polarity, we also experience great difficulty in seeing the connection between the two ends of the polarity, in exploring and maintaining the inherent contradictions, and in finding a way to enhance the group's movement.

Another way this happens is that what we feel about an external object becomes an attribute of the object itself. Then we split that object into good and bad, which represent its satisfying and frustrating aspects. But in reality, all of us have to reframe how we think and move from an either/or framework to a both/and framework. The glass is both half full and half empty; the object is sometimes good and sometimes bad. In our very desire to take in the good, we also take in the bad, which jeopardizes what we most want to preserve.

Thus, the necessity of expanding our dualistic thinking, which so controls our framing of both our world and our experience, is more critical than ever. Reframing holds promise as we continue to build a global village in which all of us will contribute to the connections we create with one another. In addition, the impending change in century calls attention to emerging and evolving paradigms and challenges us to find new ways of enhancing our coming together. It also provides an interim, an interlude for stock-

taking and reevaluation. For many, the new millennium holds the promise of birthing a world substantially different from the one we have now. Certainly, one starting place for significant change is continued attention to the quality of our group life, with all its accompanying struggles and delights.

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God, Psychoanalysis, and Contemplative Prayer

John E. Perito, M.D.

One need not have been in one of the psychologically helping professions for very long before being introduced to the concept of transference—that tendency in humans to react toward individuals in the present as though they were significant people from their past. Without an appreciation for this concept, a professional would find it difficult to understand the exaggerated feelings of affection or rage that emerge in those seeking help. Whereas positive transference feelings can be used to sustain a deeply troubled person, negative transference feelings—unless they are properly dealt with—can drive an individual in need away. In psychoanalysis, the so-called transference neurosis gives a person some firsthand experience and an opportunity to work through many of his or her childish feelings. One doesn't hear a great deal about how transference can influence one's spiritual life, but it certainly can. Anyone who has striven for self-knowledge can understand that a very different perspective arises when one focuses not only on conventional wisdom but also on the dimension of the spiritual.

Having spent a good deal of my professional life doing psychoanalysis, and only more recently having become acquainted with contemplative prayer, I cannot help but be struck by certain similarities in the two processes. In this article, I attempt to clarify and

develop what some of these similarities and differences are and how the two processes might complement one another.

PSYCHOANALYSIS

Psychoanalysis begins when a child first starts to wonder about things going on inside. There are feelings to be named, thoughts to be sorted out, and motivations to be understood. Much of this goes on without the child paying attention to what is developing, but even a two- or three-year-old can ask an endless series of questions. At some age, one recognizes that there is a capacity to reflect upon oneself as well as the world.

As this self-reflective capacity grows, one can continue to develop it independently. In many cases, things start to get confusing, conflicts develop, and one experiences psychic pain and often other psychic symptoms. This can prompt one to see a therapist or analyst for help.

The more traditional analytic schools are interested in assisting the individual to understand more about how the mind works. Unlike a psychotherapist, whose focus is on helping a person to cope with certain psychological symptoms or to function more effectively, the analyst helps to direct one's attention to

intrapsychic processes. As a byproduct of this work, psychological symptoms diminish and functioning usually improves, but these are not the goals of analytic work itself.

Psychoanalysis requires certain tasks of the analyst and of the analysand. Individuals undergoing analysis must agree to say whatever comes to mind without the usual screening of what seems irrelevant or embarrassing. They must also agree to attend frequent sessions. Analysts listen to the flow of associations and then point out whatever they think might be relevantly connected. The analysands are then in a position to react to what is said, again with whatever comes to mind. This simple process can have far-reaching effects when carried out faithfully by suitable individuals.

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

During the course of one's life, one might be graced by the desire to go deep into one's soul and closer to the Ultimate Source of all things, the Ultimate Why. This is done through contemplative prayer—a process whose initiation and proceedings, like those of analysis, are simple. One begins contemplative prayer by setting aside daily times for reflection in a conducive environment. One assumes a body posture that will enhance relaxation and openness (as does reclining on the couch in analysis). There are various simple exercises or practices that are designed as tools to foster this openness: focusing on one's breathing; thinking about a passage from scripture; chanting a word or phrase; performing relaxation exercises and listening to one's body; or, as Buddhist author Thich Nhat Hanh suggests, "looking deeply" into everything about us. This reminds me of the little girl who asked her father when he started believing in God. His reply was, "When I first saw you after you were born." I believe that it is difficult for anyone to look at any living creature with more than a passing glance and not marvel at its complexity, which is far beyond our power to replicate.

Once analysis or contemplative prayer has begun, some interesting things start to happen. Both processes are inner-directed and are done with the help of another. In analysis, the other is the analyst; in contemplative prayer, the Other is God. Over time, both processes require a trust deep enough to expose one's nakedness and a willingness to look at all that is there. This has been difficult for us humans since sin originated in the Garden of Eden and we felt the need to be clothed.

When one begins analysis, there are many things to recount about one's life history and important relationships. At times, one is surprisingly moved to tears

as repressed memories emerge and old pain is recalled. When one begins mental prayer, it is amazing how this same history takes on a new dimension as it is seen through God-illuminated eyes. Life becomes more meaningful as old values fade and new ones develop. Unexplained tears come with much relief. Often, they are associated with feelings of gratitude, peace, forgiveness, and amazement at the Providence of God.

One of the most striking similarities that I have experienced between analysis and contemplative prayer is relating to someone who is not seen. After an initial evaluation and some discussion about the conditions for analysis (e.g., times of sessions, fees, and the need to say everything that comes to mind) the analyst invites the analysand to lie on the couch while the analyst listens from a position behind the person's head. Once one does this, there is a very clear sense of the presence of someone who cannot be seen. The awareness of God's presence is likewise ushered in by lighting a candle, making the sign of the cross, or taking a few deep breaths. God and analyst are both then available to receive everything that one has and everything that one is.

ROLE OF COMPASSION

Dr. Marcus Borg, in his 1996 lecture series at the Chautauqua Institute in New York, discussed the compassion of Jesus. He spoke about the derivation of the word *compassion* from the Hebrew and Aramaic words for "womb," with overtones of life giving, nourishing, and encompassing the life within. According to Dr. Borg, compassion is the central quality of God and the central ethical teaching of Jesus. During his discussion he cited Luke 6:36: "Be compassionate as God is compassionate."

The analytic situation is sometimes referred to as a "holding environment" that allows the analysand to rectify some of the traumas of the past or, in some cases, to develop characteristics for the first time. The analyst's attitude and the environment for this new growth need to be compassionate. In contemplative prayer, one is often doing little more than attending to the compassion of God.

A suggestion from the analyst that one might wish to begin with an autobiographical sketch brings a little sense of direction and control, perhaps not dissimilar to the kind of control that is felt when one starts focusing on breathing in contemplative prayer. The interesting thing about this comparison is that neither analysand nor analyst knows what is coming, but God does. (As an aside, a rather curious reaction frequently happens early in analysis. One begins to sense the unseen presence as Godlike, knowing so much by reading one's mind or being able to take away pain or

Both analysis and contemplative prayer are inner-directed processes done with the help of another: in one case, the analyst; in the other case, God

provide understanding in some magical way. This fantasy ceases when one really appreciates that the analyst doesn't have miraculous powers—just skills to help one see oneself and the world in a truer light. The thought might return in contemplative prayer when God's love and power are realistically valued.

RESISTANCE AND CONFUSION

Before one goes very far in either process, however, the flow of ideas and feelings that one can comfortably report or pray about begins to slow down. One notices that there are moments when revealing oneself doesn't feel safe. One becomes resistant to carrying out the task of saying whatever comes to mind or thinking about certain things before God. What is feared is often not immediately clear, but if pursued will turn out to be related to some feeling that one is projecting on the analyst or God. The analysand may fear that the analyst is silent because of disinterest, or may imagine that the analyst is awestruck by the brilliance being witnessed. Similarly, God may be seen as a critical parent, a threatening father, or One who is never available in times of need. One might miss a session of analysis to avoid presumed shaming by the analyst; one might avoid contemplative prayer because it never seems to be good enough or what God expects.

Since we frequently do this kind of projecting in daily life, it is certainly to be expected in analyzing or praying. These kinds of reactions often go back to significant persons from one's past, through the transference process described earlier. It is likewise possible for both God and analyst to be seen in more positive terms (e.g., as a loving mother, warm and attentive to every need). Such positive feelings tend to

foster rather than impede analysis or contemplative prayer, but their absence can become quite painful. These kinds of transference reactions need to be examined from other perspectives, either psychological or theological, in order to gain a more realistic appreciation of their meaning.

God and analyst spend long periods of listening without much apparent response. When there is a response, it may be a brief comment or a small grace. And then there are times when analysts have a great deal to say and can tie up many fragments from one's life that have been gathering for months. Likewise, there are times when God pours out graces in what seem to be overwhelming torrents that can effect profound changes in one's life.

One of the marvels of the human mind is that it can function very rapidly. This means that different trains of thought and feelings can occur simultaneously, which can cause a sense of conflict and confusion regarding what to talk about. When this happens in analysis, the analyst may suggest that it might be more useful to pursue what seems to be a more difficult line of feeling or thinking. When it happens in mental prayer, one might likewise choose to follow the more difficult line in God's presence, or simply choose to let all lines of thought go and focus more directly on the Divine Presence.

DRAWING CLOSER TO GOAL

With the posture of openness common to both analysis and contemplative prayer, there are many directions in which one can go to understand how the mind works or how one draws closer to God. After a while, it becomes clear that one is following one of two forms of thinking or praying: One is either considering issues in the presence of the analyst or God, or one is focusing directly on the analyst or God. When the analysand's mind turns in his or her direction, the analyst is attentive to signs of how childish distortions color adult behaviors.

To attempt to say something about drawing closer to God is more difficult. One can theologically object that we cannot draw closer to God because of divine immanence. As scripture states, "In Him we live and move and have our being." Therefore, getting closer to God is really saying something more about our attentiveness than about changes taking place in God. We might gain something by considering what is involved in drawing closer to a special friend. There must be a feeling of trust that we will be safe. There is a growing desire for intimacy and growing communication and a willingness to share our deepest secrets. There is a willingness to spend a considerable amount of time with this friend. And any deci-

sions that are made keep the friend's interests in mind. A 1965 quote from Thomas Merton might speak to the issue: "Life is this simple. We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent, and God is shining through it all the time. The only thing is that we don't see it." All of this is to say nothing of divine grace, moving us along in our journey, with God sharing His divine life with us.

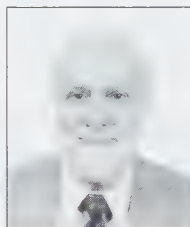
LIVING IN THE MOMENT

One further similarity between contemplative prayer and analysis is living in the moment. The analyst continually draws attention to what the analysand is experiencing in the here and now. The analysand may be reporting a memory from the past, but the analyst is clarifying that the memory is being presently experienced. The implication is that it can be influenced in whatever direction the analysand may choose. This is often an opportunity to view how the present thought is stimulating feelings toward the analyst as well. In contemplative prayer, one strives to be aware of God's constant presence and to be attentive to how anything else one might think or feel relates to that reality.

In pursuing contemplative prayer, one often will seek the help of a spiritual director. I believe that spiritual directors have at least one thing more in common with analysts than psychotherapists do. A psychotherapist will often feel a need to immediately help patients in pain and will accordingly provide strong support, education, and suggestions to im-

prove their coping skills and relieve some of their suffering. The analyst and spiritual director look for something else to develop. The analyst knows that people have a capacity to appreciate and understand themselves. This capacity is often referred to as the observing ego. It is developed over time by an identification with the analyst's tasks of listening carefully, making connections, and having a tolerance for everything inside the mind. The spiritual director knows that the Spirit is the true spiritual guide and tries to function in such a way as to allow the Spirit to direct the directee.

Someone once said that if you give someone a fish, they can eat for a day, but if you teach them how to fish, they can eat for a lifetime. Psychotherapists, psychoanalysts, and spiritual directors all want those they work with to be able to fish. It is often a matter of judgment as to what one might need from a helper and what one might be capable of at a particular time. Starving people may have to be fed before they have the strength to learn how to fish.



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Nurturing Within Communities

Rosalie McDermott, Ph.D.

Lately, a great deal has been written about “responsible stewardship” in relation to the earth’s resources, characterized by thoughtful decision making and guided by care and a sense of the sacred. Perhaps it is time to consider the concept of “responsible membership,” a parallel approach to nurturing the relationships that are essential to the viability of the sacred community of all life.

Each religious chooses to belong to a particular community, made unique by its founding story. For a community striving to sustain its own life and continue its evolution, the quality of the relationships nurtured by the members is as important as the founding story.

Members in a religious community may view their membership in a variety of ways: as a given—something taken for granted, like the ground on which we stand; as an entity that allows other relationships (forms of association) to evolve; as a choice to be with friends and bearers of common traditions; as a source of comfortable, unquestioned identity; as a series of relationships to be nurtured. To be a member implies connection, which implies attachment, which requires nurturance. It is the quality of nurturance that is most in need of attention. Just as our relationship with the planet and its resources needs to be carefully and thoughtfully framed, the membership

to which individuals commit themselves is also in need of care and consciousness.

Recent attention has been focused on the need for leaders in religious communities to be “prophetic catalysts.” This need will persist and become even more crucial in the coming years, characterized as they will be by diminishment, struggling new expressions of mission, and questions regarding new forms of membership. But there will be no strong leadership without strong, healthy members.

A SENSE OF CARING

Healthy relationships are characterized by a sense of balance—a drawing toward and a moving away from. So too, membership in religious community must be characterized by a sense of caring that encompasses both distance and attachment. To continue to choose membership, an individual freely accepts the reality that personal desire will not always come first; it will be placed in relationship to the mission that drives the group. Within the members’ continued choice to walk with each other rests the sacrifice that ignites the group’s energy for its mission.

If life-long membership is not rooted in ongoing free choice, the capacity to nurture becomes inaccessible. There must be a deep connection among

members that surpasses personal attractiveness and is kept alive because of a shared sense of purpose. Members need to take seriously the responsibility to nurture life in each other.

MOVEMENT TO RESTRUCTURE

A current movement within communities aims to create a structure more attuned to women in mission. The new structure replaces the traditional relationship between members and a superior with a heightened personal accountability of members to each other. It is important that both sides of the leadership-membership equation be paid attention to in this movement. While the new structure has the capacity to energize and free up the group, it can also reveal all the weaknesses in the connections among members. It could be that the traditional roles of authority have sustained those connections, and once those roles are removed, a huge crack in the system of relationship among the members is revealed. Unless connections among them are thoughtfully nurtured, the new possibility carried within the movement to restructure will founder and break down.

If members have taken each other for granted and developed a mode of relationship that is more distant than personal, the challenge to become involved with each other is great. While the purpose of religious life is rooted in the articulated mission of the group, the quality of the relational life of the members is an essential form of the ground on which that purpose rests.

In recent years, the predominant source of nurturance for the individual religious has been various forms of ministry. In the context of ministry, members feel affirmed and valued. This is not always duplicated in the context of community. Perhaps it is unrealistic to expect that either context can or should mirror the other. The members' need of appreciation for each other must be met in order to sustain the changes that will continue to shape religious life.

One way to think anew about the bonds of community that connect members is to view those bonds as forms of interdependent union among different, unique individuals. We have long had the language of valuing diversity; the practices needed to nurture communion, however, are barely coming into existence. Membership is the field upon which the new unity will be fashioned, with care and thoughtfulness.

Members must articulate realistic expectations of each other. Membership is larger than the day-to-day interactions of living under the same roof. While the choice to live together remains a powerful witness to

the value of community, making such a choice does not ensure that the requirements of membership are met.

LEARNING IS ONGOING

Members must continue to learn together the meaning of the life they continue to choose. If there is no sustained, common study and reflection, the creation of the new will be only out of old experience, uninformed by insight and totally at the whim of memory. Many groups are setting directions for themselves that require the members to engage in sustained study—together. This is a new discipline that comes from some thirty collective years of activity in the name of renewal. The persistent call to become more contemplative has to mean more than simply encouraging the quieting process. There is information available, but it must be accessed and reflected on, and its meaning must be shaped by a sustained communal effort.

Calls to create new forms of membership can lead vowed members to the feeling that only the new has value—an unfortunate conclusion. Within the vowed life, much has yet to be discovered through a common endeavor to reveal to each other the meaning and mystery of such a choice. Life cannot be made up of *either/or* and sustain itself; everyone needs to learn that there is room for *both/and*. The quest for new forms of membership—or, more accurately, new forms of association—need not be a search for only what is externally different; it can also be a call to explore what may seem to be the most obvious—what is closest.

Women in particular search for ways in which to nurture, to give life to others. What happens when this search is either never undertaken or abandoned along the way? Membership in religious community provides a context in which individuals can give life to one another. The celebration of that process should be one of the most obvious characteristics of those who continue to choose life in community.

We live in a time that cries out for balance. As religious, we have the unique opportunity to show that living a balanced life is possible. Can we each accept the challenge to care for the resource of ourselves without losing our focus on mission? Can we understand that doing so is an exercise in responsible membership and the faithful stewarding of resources?

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Vocation Promotion and Religious Formation

Joel Giallanza, C.S.C.

Since the publication of *Vita Consecrata* (a post-synodal apostolic exhortation by Pope John Paul II, March 1996), men and women in the various forms of consecrated life have been reflecting on the document, weighing it in light of their own experiences, and determining its applicability to their own institutes' heritage and tradition. While it is generally acknowledged that the document does not break new ground in the theology of consecrated life, some sections are helpful reminders of the basic values and priorities at the very heart of that life within the church.

One such section focuses on the ministries of vocation promotion and formation. In the first part of this article, I offer some perspectives on those ministries as they are presented in *Vita Consecrata*. Though that document also addresses continuing formation, my comments will focus primarily on initial formation. In the second part of the article, I identify some human dimensions that have a special role in these ministries.

The discussion of vocation promotion and initial formation is situated in chapter 2 of the postsynodal document, entitled "Consecrated Life as a Sign of Communion in the Church"—specifically, within section 3 of that chapter, which focuses on "Looking to the Future." This placement is encouraging, for it assigns significant importance to these ministries. The

implication is that, apart from the quality and fruitfulness of vocation promotion and formation, consecrated life as a continuing sign of communion in the church will be jeopardized. While that may be a statement of the obvious relationship between these ministries and the future of religious institutes, it is worthy of reflection as consecrated persons examine their attitudes toward vocations, formation, and the future of their way of life.

VOCATION PROMOTION

Vita Consecrata acknowledges that "the changes taking place in society and the decrease in the number of vocations are weighing heavily on the consecrated life in some regions of the world." Those changes and that decrease have been primary concerns of religious institutes in recent decades, sometimes with discouraging effects. The document insists that "the various difficulties stemming from the decline in personnel and apostolates must in no way lead to a loss of confidence in the evangelical vitality of the consecrated life." The basis of such confidence is the realization that "what is required of each individual is not success, but commitment to faithfulness." This is an important point for vocation promoters, formators, and all consecrated persons to

ponder. Fidelity, not success, is the hallmark of evangelical and apostolic effectiveness.

After these preliminary observations, the document focuses on the ministry of vocation promotion. The primary message on that subject appears to be directed toward those areas of the world experiencing decline and difficulties in receiving vocations. However, several points are equally applicable to areas currently experiencing steady growth and receiving many vocations.

First, consecrated persons “have a future to the extent that still other men and women generously welcome the Lord’s call.” There is a direct relationship between the ministry of vocation promotion and the future of the institute. Our initial response can be that this is obvious simply because if there are no vocations, there will eventually and inevitably be no institute. However, this point also concerns the future quality of the community. It is not merely the quantity of vocations that will influence the future of consecrated life; the quality of vocations will even more dramatically shape that future. Quantity is no guarantee that the Lord’s call will be welcomed generously; only the quality and character of those who come can assure that.

Second, “besides promoting prayer for vocations, it is essential to act, by means of explicit presentation and appropriate catechesis.” This statement is applicable to consecrated persons anywhere in the world. Praying for vocations is insufficient without acting. Assuredly, prayer will keep the importance of vocations high in the awareness of community members, but it is not magic. It must be accompanied by strategic action. The strategy the document recommends is twofold:

Explicit presentation. We must speak not only about vocations to Christianity and to the church in general terms, but also about consecrated life specifically and about our own religious institute in particular. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. Such a presentation provides a clear witness of the joy and sense of pride we experience in being members of our community. If we cannot communicate that joy and pride, then it is unlikely that we will be able to attract others who are considering a vocation to consecrated life.

Appropriate catechesis. There is an educational, catechetical dimension to vocation promotion ministry. Especially in countries where Christianity is not the dominant religion—and even in countries where it is—we cannot assume that our audience will understand what the consecrated life entails. Thus, clarity is essential when explaining the basic components of this life (mission, prayer, community, vows) and when presenting the specific character of

those components within the particular institute in which the individual is interested. That explanation and presentation can be significant parts of an individual’s discernment and decision about a vocation.

Third, “The invitation of Jesus, ‘Come and see’ (John 1:39), is the golden rule of pastoral work for promoting vocations.” The challenge here is clear. Our presentation and our catechesis about consecrated life must be evident in the way we live every day. Our happiness in this way of life must be apparent to others. The challenge to vocation promoters is that they must be willing to regularly remind the community of the need for consistency and to point out to the community its strengths and weaknesses in that regard. The ministry of vocation promoters is not just to recruit new members for the institute but also to see that the community is prepared to receive new members—in other words, to be a mirror for the community. That task will not always make vocation promoters popular among the members, but it will provide an important service that will affect the future quality of the institute.

Fourth, “This work aims at presenting the attraction of the person of the Lord Jesus and the beauty of the total gift of self for the sake of the Gospel.” This is the heart of vocation promotion. In our world and societies today, so many realities compete for our attention and allegiance. In the midst of all that, one of our primary tasks as consecrated persons is to present Jesus of Nazareth as attractive, as one to whom an individual would want to commit his or her life precisely because he or she could discover God’s will through that commitment. The task is to identify ways of presenting Jesus and self-giving as attractive for the specific social and cultural setting in which the vocation promoter is ministering.

Fifth, *Vita Consecrata* notes a necessary caution in vocation promotion today: In areas where there are many vocations, we may have cause for “optimism and hope”; nevertheless, in areas where there are few vocations, we must guard against “lax or unwise recruitment.” I would add that in areas where there are many vocations, we must take care to have sufficient screening. We know that not everyone considers the possibility of consecrated life for the best of reasons, and carelessness in accepting those who come can have very negative effects on the community. Periodically, vocation promoters, in conjunction with those in authority, must review the promotion and admission procedures and requirements.

Sixth, “the task of promoting vocations should increasingly express a joint commitment of the whole church.” Because religious institutes live and minister within the context of the church, vocation promoters necessarily work in collaboration with pastors

and parents and teachers. The person interested in joining the community thus learns that a vocation to consecrated life is to the whole church, not only to a particular work or a specific institute.

Seventh, the document asks religious institutes to “invest their best resources generously in vocational work.” Clearly, most communities have addressed this quite seriously by consistently choosing excellent personnel for the ministry of vocation promotion. But the text must also be read with a future perspective in mind; that is, institutes must identify and prepare individuals to be the successors of the present promoters. The ministry of vocation promotion consumes time and energy, and this does have an effect on the personnel involved. The challenge to vocation promoters is to recognize their own tiredness at times and to take sufficient rest and relaxation to refresh their enthusiasm and energy. Otherwise, they will inadvertently communicate their tiredness to those who are excited about committing their life to the Lord as consecrated persons.

In light of these reflections, I offer the following questions for consideration and discussion among vocation promoters:

- What are the primary qualities and characteristics you look for in someone who is considering consecrated life in your institute?
- What is your principal message about the identity of consecrated life in your institute?
- In which ways can the institute be better prepared to receive new members?
- How do you present Jesus as attractive, and the beauty of the total gift of self, within the social and cultural contexts in which you minister?
- What process is used to ensure regular review of promotion and admission procedures and requirements?
- What challenges and difficulties do you encounter in working with pastors, parents, and teachers?
- What means do you use to refresh your energy and enthusiasm for your ministry?

RELIGIOUS FORMATION

Complexity of formation ministry. The ministry of formation continues to be among the most challenging and difficult within the church today. A major part of that challenge and difficulty lies within the very nature of the ministry. Formators are called to guide and accompany others as they move toward incorporation into consecrated life within the institute, to model that life for them, and to evaluate them in their ability and capacity to live consecrated life. Because of their multiple components, these will never

be easy tasks. Formators must know human nature and something of the cultural backgrounds of those in the program, respect individual differences, challenge inconsistencies, and lead people toward living the life and example of both Jesus and the founder or foundress. They must also work to build and live community with those in formation.

Formators must take quite seriously the reality of the pressures that work on them. Sometimes pressures and tensions come from within the formation community, but they can come from the wider membership also, through expectations and assumptions. Most formators probably are aware of and have experienced the pressures and tensions that come from within the program, so I will highlight two that can come from the wider community.

First, expectations and assumptions may surround a particular individual within the formation program. For example, it may be silently expected and assumed that a person will do well in a given level of formation because he or she did so well in previous stages. Yet each stage of formation can and often does reveal dimensions of a person's life that did not emerge earlier. If the membership is not aware of that reality, formators can find themselves in a very uncomfortable situation when difficult decisions must be made about an individual's capacity to continue in the formation program.

Second, expectations and assumptions may surround the program itself. All consecrated persons have had their own experiences of formation from the time when they first entered the institute. Apart from the members' actual involvement in formation ministry, it is possible—and even probable—that their understanding of formation will be based on their own time in the prenovitiate or novitiate or post-novitiate. So when those in formation are seen engaged in this or that activity or project, the members may complain about the quality of formation being given to the newer generation, because it appears to be very different from what they understood and experienced formation to be. This too can place formators in an awkward situation of having to apologize for or defend the formation program.

In response to both these situations, formators must fully accept and embrace the responsibility and task of their ministry, without apology or defense, knowing that they have the support of those in authority. Formators must not become caught in the middle of arguments and disagreements about contemporary formation. When these begin to emerge, they should simply refer the concerned parties to those in authority. Formators should not take on the role of apologists or defense lawyers. Such stances consume valuable time and energy that should be

directed into the program itself and the good of those in it. However, formators should work with those in authority to create forums in which the current formation programs and policies can be explained to and discussed by the wider community.

Role of formators. In *Vita Consecrata*, the section that focuses on the specific work of formators notes that God is the “educator par excellence.” The document then indicates that “formation . . . is a sharing in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions the inner attitudes of the Son in the hearts of young men and women.” Several implications flow from this.

First, “those in charge of formation must . . . be very familiar with the path of seeking God, so as to be able to accompany others on this journey.” It is not sufficient simply to know the facts about the institute. Admittedly, that is an indispensable part of formation ministry. However, formators must understand the nature of the spiritual life for the members. What are the stages of coming to union with God as a member of the institute? What are the signs of growth? Such understanding is truly a matter of justice. To choose to live as a consecrated person is to choose a life of holiness; that is clear from the lives and examples of founders and foundresses as followers of Jesus. Formators must recognize, be familiar with, and be able to lead others along the pathways to holiness; clearly, they must also strive to remain on those pathways themselves. Then they will be well equipped to accompany and encourage and support those who come to share life in the institute.

Second, “sensitive to the action of grace, they will also be able to point out those obstacles which are less obvious.” Formators must be able to see behaviors that are inconsistent with consecrated life. In addition, they must also strive to read the heart of the person in formation. Attitudes and perspectives, sometimes much more than particular behaviors, can be stumbling blocks to growth. God reads hearts; so too must formators. Formators must explore the person’s motivation for seeking this way of life, because an individual can articulate a particular desire but not make the efforts necessary to realize that desire. Obstacles and inconsistencies must be pointed out so that the person can make the appropriate adjustments for continuing to grow in this way of life with integrity.

Third, “above all they will disclose the beauty of following Christ and the value of the charism by which this is accomplished.” This is the heart of the formator’s ministry. Two tasks are mentioned:

“Disclose the beauty of following Christ.” This is founded upon a simple and direct truth: if individuals seeking entrance to consecrated life are not open

and willing to meet and to know and to love Jesus, then their lives will have no solid foundation. The task of formators is to lead those in formation to the person of Jesus. The challenge for formators is to love Jesus and to maintain their own relationship with the Lord as the most important relationship in their lives.

Disclose “the value of the charism by which this is accomplished.” Following Jesus is specified through some way of life within the church. Those in formation must reflect on their call in light of the particular way that following Jesus is lived within the institute. The task of formators is to communicate clearly the gospel life and values evident in the heritage passed on by the founder or foundress. The challenge for formators is to continue learning about and studying the institute’s heritage and charism.

These two realities—the person’s developing relationship with Jesus and his or her growing understanding and integration of the community’s way of life—echo the work initiated by the vocation promoters, who presented “the attraction of the Lord Jesus and the beauty of the total gift of self.” These same realities form the basis for evaluative periods during initial formation, particularly during the novitiate and postnovitiate. Thus, there will be continuity and consistency in personal growth and development.

Means of formation. The postsynodal document notes that the “chief instrument of formation is personal dialogue.” Formators must come to know those in the formation programs. Regular interviews are irreplaceable. In previous eras, the process often appeared to be formation by automation and observation. Various aspects of the program seemed to unfold and progress as if by themselves, and so the formators could observe the responses and reactions of those in the program. Of course, observing the individual’s personal and social behaviors is still an important part of formation. However, it cannot stand alone; the formator must know what is going on within the person if accompaniment is to be truly authentic.

Today, formation involves much more participation and conversation. Dialogue, discussion, discernment, and decision making are essential parts of the process. Formation today encourages growth and development from the inside outward rather than from the outside inward, as in earlier periods within the history of consecrated life. To accompany others toward a change of behavior will not be as significant as accompanying them toward a change of heart, a change of attitude, a change of perspective and values—in brief, a change of identity. Such a change will necessarily involve behavioral modifications, but they will

go beyond any superficial responses built on what the individual perceives to be the formator's expectations. Such a change reflects ever more clearly the conversion of heart to which Jesus calls his followers.

Another aspect of personal dialogue that is helpful within the formation process concerns what the person learns about the formator, at least to some extent. In speaking and listening one-on-one during interviews, the person will gain some insight into the formator's life experience as a member of the institute. Sharing that experience appropriately can be a powerful component of the formation process. A significant means of support for those in formation is to see and experience their formators as people who are happy in their chosen way of life. This is an irreplaceable witness that formators can pass on to future members of the institute.

A special role is given to community in *Vita Consecrata*, insofar as "community is the chief place of formation." This is particularly important for formators to note, since consecrated persons are called to present more than an individual witness to the world. Individuality will inevitably be part of our witness, but we also give a significant witness through our life together in community. If those who come to join this way of life do not learn to live with one another, to be open to and comfortable with the many differences and diverse personalities present in community, then it will be difficult for them to present a model of peace and love and reconciliation to the people they will serve.

Thus, personal relationships and interaction, communication and dialogue are basic ingredients in the formation process precisely because they have a distinct effect on the quality of community life and the integrity of the witness it presents.

Goal of formation. The document notes that "formation is a dynamic process by means of which individuals are converted to the Word of God in the depths of their being and, at the same time, learn how to discover the signs of God in earthly realities." Discernment is a particular characteristic of formation and of the consecrated life itself. Formation is incomplete if it simply guides individuals through a process of discernment. It must teach them to be discerning persons who look for God's will in every dimension of life and who are especially sensitive to the movements of God in their own lives. Accomplishing God's will is the primary means through which consecrated persons—and all Christians—move toward union with Jesus; discerning that will is intrinsic to the process of formation.

Consecrated life is, essentially, God's work. This truth is especially important for nurturing a spirit of

service and selflessness in those who come. Our abilities and talents and efforts as consecrated persons are important, but they are always placed in the service of God. Jesus' mission was truly God's work; since our efforts are directed toward continuing that mission, our work becomes God's own. This truth forms the foundation and motivation for any authentic growth in generosity and mutual trust.

In light of these reflections, I offer the following questions for consideration and discussion among formators:

- How would you characterize the current relationship (a) between the wider community and your ministry of formation? (b) between those in authority and your ministry?
- What means do you use for your own (a) continuing formation and spiritual development? (b) continuing education in the institute's heritage and charism?
- What topics do you focus on during evaluative periods with those in formation? What methods of evaluation do you use?
- How would you describe the developments in your institute's formation programs since the time you became a member?
- What are the strongest/weakest points in the formation programs today?
- How does formation in your institute encourage and assist a person to become discerning?
- What means do you use to refresh your energy and enthusiasm for your ministry?

HUMAN DIMENSIONS

The ministries of vocation promotion and formation have, and will continue to have, a definite and direct impact on the future of consecrated life. Decisions that vocation promoters and formators make now will have implications for the institute even ten or fifteen years from now. Those in formation today will hold positions of authority and formation tomorrow, and so in their turn will make decisions about the future of the institute for yet another generation. Various aspects of human nature and human interaction have particularly valuable roles in supporting the effectiveness of vocation promoters and formators.

Role of intuition. Intuition can have an appropriate role in the process of admission to the institute and then in initial formation. While intuition may not be absolutely accurate, it is important that we give the information it provides serious consideration. Because intuitive knowledge is shaped by our own

experience in and familiarity with life in the institute, it should not be dismissed lightly. Promoters and formators are sometimes hesitant to use such knowledge principally because intuition “sees” intangibles. As a result, explaining and specifying their concerns become particularly challenging.

Vocation promoters and formators are engaged in a pastoral ministry. Thus, when wondering about and commenting on an individual’s growth and development, they may be quick to say, “Well, I’m probably wrong about this, BUT . . .” By contrast, I would recommend that promoters and formators think first in terms of being correct about their initial perspective and then be attentive to any characteristics of the person’s attitudes and behaviors that do not support it. That approach, combined with some insight about the situation from others who serve as vocation promoters and formators, can help in confirming or contradicting the information provided by intuition.

In general, if vocation promoters and formators are consistently unsure about a person, I believe it is better to trust that intuition and ask the person to consider another vocation rather than to take the risk of saying, “Oh, the next stage of formation will help this person to work out the difficulty that is evident now.” All too often, the individual in question does not work out the difficulty—and years later, community members are still wondering how he or she was ever professed or even accepted into the community.

Role of networking. There is an enormous store of valuable knowledge and experience among vocation promoters and formators. Those in authority often call on them to take responsibility for tasks unrelated to their primary ministries (admittedly, sometimes too often). However, this is evidence of the awareness and trust those in authority have regarding the talents and skills that promoters and formators bring to the good of the whole community.

Regular meetings among vocation promoters and formators within the institute and with those from other institutes can be useful and supportive forums in which to share information, exchange ideas and insights about their ministries, and learn from each other’s experiences. These meetings can also provide a means of taking a break from promotion and formation, especially if some social dimension such as a meal can be built into them. Over time, they create a pool of shared experience, information, and relaxation.

Also, vocation promoters and formators can help one another with particular cases. There are many ways of asking about a vocation prospect or someone in formation without compromising confidentiality. Those who are considering consecrated life and those already in formation come from the same cultures

and age groups, and face the same social realities and pressures, as do the men and women currently joining other institutes. Because of these similarities, vocation promoters and formators can draw from the wisdom and experience of others in the same ministries when particularly difficult issues or situations emerge.

Role of communication. Much of what goes on in vocation promotion and formation today is accomplished through personal contact and communication of information, especially with two groups of individuals.

First, vocation promoters and formators communicate with those considering membership and with those already in formation. However that communication is accomplished, it must be done on a regular basis precisely so that when the times for evaluation and decision arrive, there will be no surprises. The individual will be familiar with what has been said and with what is being said. Communication in this regard is closely related to justice. When a person is completely and genuinely surprised by what is being said, promoters and formators must take the time to explore why. Either the communication has not been clear and complete over a period of time, or the individual simply does not have the ability to hear the truth of what is being said.

Second, vocation promoters and formators communicate with those in authority. The final decision for what is done in vocations and formation is made, and appropriately so, by those who are not in these ministries. Those in authority must be provided with sufficient information concerning individuals who are considering joining the community or who are already in formation. Thus, when an official report is sent, there will be no surprises. Such communication enables those in authority to offer ready and regular support to the promoters and formators.

There is another dimension to communication with those in authority: education. Vocation promoters and formators should not assume that those in authority are always aware of every aspect and approach regarding the latest trends in these ministries. Those in authority have many concerns and issues to address, among which are vocation promotion and formation. Communications with them can serve as a type of education, keeping them up-to-date not only on the progress or lack of progress of particular individuals but also on the techniques currently being used in vocation promotion and formation.

Role of relaxation. vocation promoters and formators tend not to take very good care of themselves in terms of sleep, rest and relaxation, and arranging oc-

casional breaks from the demands of ministry. Relaxation does have a role in these ministries, not just for the personnel involved but for the ministry itself.

Both vocation promotion and formation demand a high degree of intensity and attentiveness, consuming much time and energy. That is appropriate, since these are engaging and important ministries. However, to continue being attentive, focused, aware, and understanding of what is going on in the lives of vocation prospects and of those in formation, promoters and formators must have some regular means of replenishing energy.

This is particularly applicable to formators, since they live with the individuals with whom they work most closely. Their experience, then, can be very much like living in a fishbowl. Everything they do—pray, eat meals, work around the house, relax—is watched and may be given some interpretation, regardless of what is actually intended, said, or done. Though formators may not always be aware of it, this reality does drain energy, especially because they have few opportunities to simply be themselves, relax, and talk about something other than formation.

Given the particular situation and setting, it may not be easy to create the time and space for some form of relaxation, of “getting away” from ministry. In various places around the world, it is very difficult for vocation promoters and formators to do that because their options are so limited. Nevertheless, the possibility of creating such options should be explored seriously. Vocation promotion and formation—along with administration—will continue to be among those ministries within consecrated life that can take a great toll unless ways are found to provide periodic breaks.

TO LIVE AS JESUS LIVED

I will conclude these reflections simply by highlighting two principal tasks for vocation promoters and formators—namely, identification and formation. Identification underlies the work of vocation promoters and refers to their ability and task to determine if a person has the qualities cited below, or at least the willingness and capacity to develop them. Formation, of course, is the principal task of formators: guiding and teaching others the means of living as a member of the institute.

Formators continue and build on the work that vocation promoters have begun.

Vocation promoters and formators must seek to identify and form persons who:

- have a passion to know and to do God’s will;
- are committed to following and living the example and teachings of Jesus;
- choose to follow Jesus explicitly through the vowed life;
- are eager to continue the Lord’s mission through the life and ministries of the institute;
- recognize the importance and necessity of fidelity to prayer (personal, communal, liturgical);
- have the capacity to live community and the willingness to live with others from various cultures and to minister in diverse cultural settings; and
- are willing and capable of collaborating with others in ministry.

Surely, other specific points might be added regarding ministry, prayer, community, and vows, and still others might be added that are proper to the specific institute, but the seven listed above are fundamental for the ministries of vocation promotion and formation. Promoters and formators have the privilege of leading others toward the same grace of transformation into the living likeness of Jesus that was so powerfully at work in the lives and examples of founders and foundresses. The challenge, always, is to live as Jesus lived. Vocation promotion and formation can facilitate that way of life, now and for the future.



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Coping with Anxiety

Maria Edwards, R.S.M.

It is no great revelation to most Americans that we live in a time when our society and the church are often fraught with differing degrees of tension, confusion, fear, and anxiety. The news media consistently focus on the inability of the American people to cope with the everyday stresses inherent in these final years of the twentieth century. The reported statistics reflect an increasing number of suicides, murders, substance abuse, various types of addictions, school violence, obsessive-compulsive disorders, depression, physical illnesses, family problems, and divorces.

Given the reality of the data, it is no wonder that a sense of hopelessness and futility frequently creeps into our lives, sometimes unexpectedly. Even the strongest among us often experience some uneasiness and worry. Since anxiety is a fact of life, it necessarily affects priests and others in religious life as well.

Unfortunately, religious and clergy are not immune from the world's horrible ills. Some may experience a generalized anxiety with no apparent external cause. Still others may feel a terrible anxiety even after the situation that precipitated it is long over. While the initial anxiety may indeed have been proportionate to the threat that the danger posed, the difficulty lies in the fact that the person still feels, long after the event, the same fear and apprehension he or she felt in the originating moment.

Being in a terrible car accident can keep a person from wanting to drive or even from getting into an automobile again. Having been on an airplane that had serious engine trouble might prevent a person from ever flying again. Failing an exam may hinder a person from continuing with his or her education. Being treated with disregard and disrespect by a significant other may destroy a person's self-esteem. Experiencing a loved one's physical suffering and painful death in a hospital may keep a person from visiting sick friends in the hospital or from going to wakes or funerals. Such struggles frequently haunt individuals and cause them to experience extreme physical and psychological conflict.

OUR INNER MANDATES

Confusion as to who we are and what we need to do for ourselves is the most painful thing about any type of anxiety disorder. A prolonged state of apprehension destroys true self-awareness and causes us to feel empty and alone. But a positive side of anxiety is that it can serve as a psychic alarm, alerting us that a major struggle is happening inside us.

Freud once asserted that the great cause of much psychological illness is the dread of authentic knowledge about ourselves—about our feelings, inclina-

tions, remembrances, beliefs, fears, thoughts, capabilities, potentialities, and future. We sometimes tend to evade psychological growth because the truth often evokes feelings of personal deficiency and inadequacy. And with that avoidance, we frequently discover an even sadder kind of inner resistance: a denial of our finest side, our natural giftedness, our keenest aspirations, and our loftiest potentialities.

Sometimes religious and clergy are caught up in too many inner demands and decrees: they should be paragons of honesty, generosity, dignity, fairness, and unselfishness; should always think of others before they think of themselves; should never refuse to help anyone; should never feel jealous, angry, or frightened; should never change their beliefs or opinions; should never fail at anything they attempt. Such inner dictates contribute to what psychiatrist Karen Horney, author of *Neurosis and Human Growth*, calls "the tyranny of the shoulds."

Many religious are striving to be perfect, when all God wants is for them to be true to their innermost selves and to try to become who they were made to be: their fully human selves. God loves us with all our faults and weaknesses. In fact, our unwanted inadequacies may be what God loves most about us. We seem to turn to God for divine assistance more in our moments of fear, anxiety, failing, disappointment, and acknowledged sinfulness.

Perfectionistic internal mandates are much too austere and much too difficult to fulfill. When we attempt to live out of such rigid directives, we feel heavily burdened and experience life as a chore to be endured. In all our attempts at trying to be perfect, we appear never to achieve enough self-confidence or self-determination.

Individuals who experience overwhelming anxiety are usually people who primarily need outside affirmation of their own value and self-worth. When external confirmation, appreciation, and validation are forthcoming, the sense of dread seems to subside. But the misgivings quickly return when such support is lacking for an extended period of time or when the person spends a lot of time alone.

It is true that we all need others to show us some genuine warmth, concern, love, and a feeling of welcome. But too many of us were appreciated as children by our parents, and as adults by our communities, for what we accomplished or how well we performed given tasks. In many instances, doing was rewarded and being was reproved or simply ignored. Interior self-validation was not usually encouraged as a personal goal or as a benefit for a healthy community.

In a poem entitled "Growing Pains," German poet Christian Morgenstern has expressed the inner con-

flict between our ideas of who we could be and who we feel we really are:

I shall succumb, destroyed by myself
I who am two, what I could be and what I am.
And in the end one will annihilate the other.
The *Would-be* is like a prancing steed
(*I am* is fettered to his tail)
Is like a wheel whose fingers twine
Into his victim's hair, is like a vampire
That sits upon his heart, and sucks and sucks.

Our fear of loving ourselves as God commands and intends can destroy what we would become if we were free of devastating worry and anxiety. Our inner mandates will imprison our self-esteem and self-determination until we transform them into healthy thinking patterns.

GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition (DSM-IV)*, the integral characteristic of generalized anxiety disorder is immoderate uneasiness and worry (fearful anticipation), transpiring more days than not, for a period of at least six months, about a variety of incidents or endeavors. The individual finds it perplexing and almost impossible to try to manage the misgivings.

The anxiety and worry are accompanied by at least three additional symptoms from a list that encompasses the following: nervous agitation, exhaustion, difficulty in concentrating, irritability, muscle tautness, and troubled sleep. The anxious person has difficulty in controlling his or her worry and often reports related impairment in family or community relationships, as well as in normal social, occupational, or ministerial functioning.

Many people with generalized anxiety disorder also experience somatic symptoms, such as cold or clammy hands, dry mouth, sweating, nausea, urinary frequency, and trouble with swallowing. Most who initiate a psychotherapeutic relationship usually acknowledge that they have felt some elements of excessive anxiety all their lives. They seek therapy as adults because the anxiety has become too disruptive of their lives and is too much of a burden to bear alone. Sometimes their friends or local superiors suggest that they reach out and get the help that they need to live a normal religious life.

PANIC DISORDER

Panic attacks happen within the framework of several distinct anxiety disorders. The central characteristic of a panic attack is a distinct period of

acute fear or overwhelming inner uneasiness that is accompanied by at least four of thirteen physiological or cognitive symptoms. The attack has an unanticipated beginning, rises to a culmination rapidly (usually in ten minutes or less), and is habitually accompanied by a sense of impending peril or imminent doom and a longing for quick deliverance. According to the *DSM-IV*, a panic attack includes at least four of the following symptoms: palpitations or accelerated heart rate, sweating, trembling or shaking, shortness of breath, a feeling of choking, chest pain or discomfort, abdominal distress, a dizzy or unsteady feeling, feelings of unreality or of being detached from oneself, fear of losing control or going crazy, fear of dying, numbness or tingling sensations, and chills or hot flashes.

Individuals who seek assistance for panic attacks, which have no apparent external triggers, describe their feelings as being powerful and recount that they thought they were about to die, totally lose control, or go crazy. They also have the desire not to return to the place where the attack occurred for a long time.

In some cases, panic attacks begin after the death of a close friend or family or community member. It is normal to try to deny the finality of the death of a loved one. The death of someone we love renews our childhood fears of abandonment—the ancient anguish of being little and being left alone. As religious or priests, we frequently feel guilty if our faith in a loved one's resurrection is doubted. In our differing ways, we need to pray for the courage to pass through the terror and the tears, the anxiety and the guilt. And in our own ways—with God's help, the help of friends, and perhaps ongoing cognitive therapy—we will eventually work our way through our confrontations, our irrational thinking, our fears, our panic attacks, our doubts, and especially our grief.

Facing our psychic pain, befriending our anxieties, and placing our trust in divine Love, we will move toward the completion of our mourning. By "completion" I mean some degree of rejuvenation, an acceptance of the things we cannot change, and an adaptation to the anxieties of life. There will surely still be times when we will cry for, yearn for, and miss our loved ones. But we will recover our sense of balance, our stamina, our hopefulness, and the

capability of enjoying and making a personal investment in our own lives and ministries.

Many psychiatrists regard panic attacks as a biologically determined illness. In addition to occurring at times of painful and profound loss, they also happen when individuals who have been prohibited free expression of their sexuality experience a clash between their desires and their repressed inclinations. Most contemporary studies of panic find it associated with serious difficulty in the patient's pattern of relationships. Most people who suffer from panic attacks find anti-anxiety medication, prescribed by psychiatrists, significantly helpful to them.

TRUST IN GOD'S LOVE

We all have to adapt sometimes with enormous difficulty, to the altered circumstances and apprehensions of life. At times we may need to seek professional help, join a support group, modify our negative thinking, notice our anxieties, face our fears, and acknowledge unwanted feelings. We need to be gentle and kind to ourselves when we are at our lowest. Community members also need to reach out and support each other in times of overwhelming anxiety or grief.

Most of all, as religious and priests, we need to be even more faithful to prayer than ever. Reading scriptural passages that relate to fear or worry and their consequent calming can be helpful (Ps. 27:1–5; Isa. 43:1–5; Matt. 6:25–34; Luke 10:38–42). Sometimes listening to soothing or religious music is also helpful. We definitely do not need to engage in self-recrimination and guilt when we experience generalized anxiety or panic attacks. We need to trust in God's love and our own ability to heal. And we can be assured that the anxiety will lift and recovery will come.



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Adult Effects of Childhood Sexual Abuse

Richard P. Vaughan, S.J., Ph.D.

It is estimated that as many as one out of five Americans experienced some form of sexual abuse when they were children. Some of these individuals were sexually abused once or twice as children, and many suffered abuse repeatedly over the course of months or even years. Clinical records show that five times more women than men have reported incidents of sexual abuse while growing up. One reason for this large difference may be a greater reluctance on the part of men to talk about their experiences of abuse. For people of both genders, however, many incidents of sexual abuse during childhood go unreported—and it appears that sexual abuse has increased in recent years.

WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

Childhood sexual abuse takes place when a person under the age of 17 is used for the sexual gratification of an adult or a person considerably older than the abused child. Sexual abuse usually involves genital contact and ranges from genital fondling to forcible and violent rape, and can result in physical injury. The most common forms of sexual abuse with girls are exhibitionism; fondling; genital contact; vaginal or anal penetration with a variety of objects; and vaginal, oral, or anal intercourse, which is most often perpe-

trated by an older male offender. Boys are also usually abused by an older male. However, recent research shows that an increased number of preschool boys have been sexually abused by their babysitters, their own mothers, or foster mothers. In the case of boys, the abuse consists of fondling, mutual masturbation, and anal or oral intercourse. Incest occurs when the offender and victim are related by blood or law.

This article examines how sexual abuse during childhood adversely affects the adult person. Popular opinion seems to hold that all sexual abuse is harmful and damaging, either immediately, shortly after the abuse, and/or in later life, whereas research shows that sexual abuse during childhood can be severely damaging, somewhat damaging, or minimally damaging, or that it may have little or no effect. If the victim is a girl and the abuse took place between the ages of 6 and 12, was repeated frequently over the course of many months or even years, was within the family (incest), and involved some form of violence or the threat of violence, the abuse is much more likely to have caused severe and lasting psychological damage.

Clinical evidence seems to show that sexual abuse is more damaging to women than to men, especially if the abuser was the father or stepfather, which was true in over half the reported cases of sexual abuse with girls. In cases involving boys, the abuser was

usually a neighbor, casual acquaintance, or stranger; sometimes it was the mother or babysitter; less frequently, it was the father or father substitute.

AFTEREFFECTS OF ABUSE

In *The Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women*, D. Russell describes a study of the clinical records and interviews of 152 women who experienced sexual abuse within their own families during childhood. Russell found that 32 percent had adverse effects in varying degrees of disturbance. Of that group, 33 percent said they were extremely upset by the experience; 27 percent were somewhat upset, 12 percent were not very upset, and the rest were not upset at all. Of all the women in the sample, 25 percent described their experiences as having a great long-term effect; 26 percent said they had some long-term effect, 27 percent said they had little effect, and 22 percent said they had no effect. Thus, in the Russell study, slightly over half the women reported that they experienced serious long-term effects from sexual abuse as children or adolescents, while the other half experienced less serious or no aftereffects.

DAMAGING CONDITIONS

Whether childhood sexual abuse is damaging or not damaging in later life depends on a number of factors, including (1) the relationship between the victim and the abuser (the closer the relationship—e.g., father vs. next-door neighbor—the greater the psychological damage); (2) the age of the child abused (children of ages 6 to 12 years are thought to be the most sensitive to psychological damage); (3) whether the abuse occurred frequently and persisted over a long period of time; (4) whether the abused child experienced severe anxiety and fear over a long period of time; (5) whether the abuse involved violence or the child was threatened with violence if he or she revealed the abuse to anyone; (6) whether the abuse was painful (with any kind of penetration being the most damaging); and (7) whether the child resisted or showed passive acquiescence (with passive acquiescence considered more harmful in the long run).

BEFORE AND AFTER ABUSE

Numerous other factors before and after sexual abuse can influence its effect on the adult personality. Previous to the abuse, factors that influence the development of the later adult are the child's personality type; degree of bonding with parents or parent substitutes, especially during the first year of

life; sexual incompatibility between parents, in the case of incest; how the child interacted with siblings and other family members; and whether the child was physically and emotionally nurtured prior to the abuse.

How the parents or caretakers react to the revelation of abuse can affect the child's adult life. If one or both parents betray the child's trust, the child can lose trust in all other people. For example, if one or both parents simply deny that the abuse ever took place and reprehend the child for "talking that way" about the abuser, especially if the abuser was a family member, the child can easily come to think, "If I cannot depend on my parents to protect me and be on my side, whom can I trust?" Moreover, such a response on the part of a parent or parent substitute isolates the child and causes him or her to feel alone in a hostile world—a feeling that can persist and that can hinder the development of good personal relationships in later life.

Some parents accuse the abused child of lying and threaten punishment if he or she ever brings up the matter again. Still other parents dismiss the matter as trivial, with such remarks as, "This happens to many children. Forget about it." The child, however, finds the sexual abuse to be anything but trivial, especially if he or she has suffered violence, was threatened with violence, or was raped.

Sometimes one or both parents take the side of the abuser—for example, when the abuser is the favored son of the mother and/or father. However, the most usual scenario is for the parent to be caught in a dilemma—not knowing how to deal equitably with both the abused and the abuser. This happens, for instance, if the abuser is a husband whom the mother loves and depends on for support, and the abused child is a daughter whom she also loves.

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Adults sexually abused during childhood or early adolescence may display a number of the following long-term effects: (1) periodic depressions, (2) lack of self-esteem, (3) poor social skills, especially in relating to persons of the opposite sex, (4) hypersexuality or sexual dysfunction, and (5) self-destructive behavior, such as self-mutilation and suicidal tendencies. In addition, many of these individuals are insecure (i.e., feel threatened by new or unfamiliar situations); feel isolated and stigmatized; and are plagued with anxiety and fear (which may account for panic attacks, sleep disturbances, nightmares, and various phobias). Their apprehension and anxiety often becomes more pronounced around issues of sexuality and sexual functioning.

FEMALE VS. MALE

In the past, studies on childhood sexual abuse based on hospital and clinical records showed that the ratio of female to male victims was 10 to 1; more recent research reports a ratio of 4 to 1. In a study of 566 sexually abused children seen at a sexual assault center, A. DeJong, A. Hervada, and G. Emmet reported that 82 percent were female and 18 percent were male (*Child Abuse and Neglect*, vol. 7, 1985). The reason for the disparity may be attributed to the reluctance of males to report sexual abuse because they fear being considered unmanly for having been sexually abused by an older man, or because they fear that people who know about the abuse will think they are homosexual. If a male victim was abused by a woman, he may think a complaint about the abuse will bring his masculinity into question, since the listener might interpret the complaint as meaning that he is not capable of enjoying sexual activity with a woman.

WHO IS THE ABUSER?

The DeJong, Hervada, and Emmet study also points out that 23.7 percent of the abusers were family members, 29.8 percent were acquaintances, and the remainder were strangers. More recent studies indicate a higher incidence of sexual assault within families and show that children 10 years of age and younger are particularly vulnerable.

Formerly, it was thought that sexual abuse was more damaging to girls than to boys, and that sexually abused girls were more likely to become maladjusted adults. More recent research tends to indicate that the sexual abuse of boys can be more damaging than previously thought, depending on the conditions under which the abuse took place, and that boys can also suffer from psychiatric disorders as a consequence of sexual abuse.

PERIODIC DEPRESSIONS CAN RESULT

Periods of depression during adult life are often one of the major consequences of sexual abuse. Depression, a lasting emotional state of sadness and grief, is often a reaction to loss, real or imagined. The sexually abused woman often feels that she has lost her childhood, wholeness, and integrity, sees herself as "damaged goods," and thinks that she can never be the same as before the sexual abuse. The sexually abused man feels used and compromised, fears that he is sexually dysfunctional, and may begin to question his sexual identity. These negative reactions toward self, along with a number of other factors, contribute to the making of periodic depressions in both male and female victims.

Being depressed is different from being down. People who occasionally feel sad, disappointed, discouraged, and frustrated are said to be down, which usually is just part of the human condition. Depression, on the other hand, is an abnormal condition that differs from normal mood swings in intensity, duration, and persistence. However, sometimes a fine line separates the two conditions, and it is difficult to tell whether an individual is down or clinically depressed.

HOPELESS AND HELPLESS

Depressed people experience a loss of all hope that things will ever get better. The depressed have given up on life and see no way out of their state of depression. They tell themselves that things will never change, no matter what they do or how hard they try. Added to the sense of hopelessness is the feeling that they cannot help themselves, and that no one else can help them either, not even their counselor or psychotherapist (which is one reason any kind of counseling or psychotherapy with depressed people is so difficult). For the depressed person, life is empty and meaningless; one depressed patient aptly described his life as "a vast desert of nothingness."

A clinical depression differs from just being down in the following ways: (1) it is more emotionally painful; (2) it lasts longer; (3) it causes a lack of interest or pleasure in almost every activity; (4) it affects eating and sleeping habits; (5) it causes fatigue and loss of energy; (6) it produces feelings of worthlessness and inappropriate guilt; (7) it diminishes the ability to think and make decisions; and (8) it may prompt thoughts of death and suicide. Other symptoms of clinical depression include apathy, inability to concentrate, lack of motivation, oversensitivity to criticism and hurt, self-blaming, self-hatred, irritability, frustration, withdrawal and isolation, and disregard for personal hygiene and appearance.

The link between sexual abuse and depression has been confirmed by a number of studies. M. Sedney and B. Brooks (*Journal of the American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, vol. 23, 1984) reported on the likelihood of depression among 301 college women and found that 65 percent of the women sexually abused as children reported episodes of depression, as opposed to 43 percent of the women who had never been sexually abused. In addition, they found that 18 percent of the sexually abused women had been hospitalized for depression, as opposed to only 4 percent of the women who had not been abused.

REPRESSION IS COMMON

For any number of victims, the incidents of sexual abuse are so disturbing and traumatic that these vic-

tims blot out the memory of the incidents through the use of a psychological mechanism called repression. In repression, the abuse victims are no longer aware of the traumatic incidents, but the memory of those incidents remain in the unconscious mind and sometimes returns to consciousness in the form of dreams, nightmares, or daytime flashback memories. When victims of sexual abuse find themselves in situations that in some way are linked to the past abuse, such as attending a film that involves torture and sexual assault, the unconscious material may reveal itself in the form of violent dreams, nightmares, or daytime flashbacks, which may be so disturbing that they cause the individual to lapse into a period of depression.

LACK OF SELF-ESTEEM

More often than not, people who have been sexually abused as children lack self-esteem and have a negative image of themselves. Self-esteem concerns how people view themselves and feel about themselves—their personal appraisal of their own worth or goodness. A fairly consistent finding is that survivors of sexual abuse perceive themselves negatively and incorporate into themselves a marked sense of badness and shame. Some even feel that they are inherently evil and unlovable.

People can have either a positive or negative view of themselves. When people perceive themselves positively, they are said to have good self-esteem; they are usually confident and self-assured, and they approach the ordinary tasks of daily living with the conviction that they will succeed. When people perceive themselves negatively, they are said to lack self-esteem, or even to have self-hatred. Individuals who lack self-esteem consider themselves bad, lack self-confidence, and are hesitant to undertake even the most ordinary tasks because of their apprehension and anxiety, prompted by a fear of failure. Whenever these people begin anything new, they often do so with the conviction that they will most probably fail, no matter how hard they try—and often they do fail because of their negative attitude.

More often than not, adult victims of childhood sexual abuse feel that they are bad and therefore different from the next person. Even though these sexually abused people may be talented and personable, highly regarded by their friends, and in no way to blame for the abuse, they are unable to see themselves as others see them, may blame themselves for the abuse, and may say to themselves, “I must have done something to provoke the abuse.” Their view of and feelings about themselves cast a shadow over just about everything they do.

HYPERSEXUALITY OR SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

Children who are sexually abused can become hypersexual, sexually dysfunctional, or a combination of both, and these orientations toward sex may carry over into adulthood. As a consequence of frequent abuse by a kindly, nonthreatening person over a period of time, children (especially if they are very young) can become overly concerned about sexual matters and easily sexually aroused, and can have a strong desire for sexual experience—all of which can give rise to hypersexual behavior in later life if not treated. On the other hand, some children and young adolescents who have experienced painful and violent abuse by a trusted person find that abuse so disgusting, ugly, and anxiety- and guilt-provoking that they become sexually inhibited or sexually dysfunctional in later life.

Typically, the hypersexual child manifests the following sexual behaviors: compulsive masturbation; an unusual knowledge of sexual acts; sexual acting out with other children, animals, and toys; and making sexual advances toward adults—all of which can become the roots of later sexual problems. On the other hand, the child who is traumatized by sexual abuse may manifest as an adult an aversion to all sexual activity or symptoms of inhibited sexuality (e.g., impotency or frigidity).

J. Gale and associates found that 41 percent of sexually abused children showed inappropriate sexual behavior, as compared with 5 percent of physically abused or nonabused children (*Child Abuse and Neglect*, vol. 13, 1992). In female victims whose hypersexual behavior persisted, childhood abuse can account for adult compulsive masturbation, sexual promiscuity, and prostitution. Male victims of childhood sexual abuse by older males may, in adolescence or adulthood, become preoccupied with sex, question their sexual orientation, have numerous heterosexual or homosexual contacts, or become involved in homosexual prostitution.

More often than not, the older childhood sexual abuse victim (i.e., over the age of five) of either gender, who is somewhat more aware of the meaning of sex, will look upon the abusive experience as disgusting, ugly, and wrong, but at the same time may find the special attention he or she receives from an admired adult flattering, and sometimes may find the sexual experience itself pleasurable, especially if he or she is a neglected child. These contradictory feelings about sexual experience often continue into adulthood and may become the root of later sexual inhibition or dysfunction.

In *Healing the Incest Wound: Adult Survivors in Therapy*, Christine A. Courtois writes that “in terms of sexual emergence, childhood sexual abuse creates a

disruption in normal developmental tasks, including dating patterns and the development of intimate relationships. Survivors often describe 'being sexually out of synch' and always in jeopardy of being more informed or behaving in a sexually inappropriate fashion with their peers. During adolescence and beyond, whether the abuse has stopped or not, two predominant sexual styles emerge: women survivors tend to be more socially and sexually withdrawn or indiscriminately sexually active. Some women survivors find that they alternate between the two. Both styles can be seen as a way for the victim to achieve control over her body and sexuality. In either style the woman may turn to drugs and alcohol use to cope with her anxieties about sexuality."

OTHER EFFECTS EXPERIENCED

Approximately half the individuals who were sexually abused as children suffer serious long-term psychological effects that seriously affect their adjustment to social and sexual situations. Three key areas of living in which that damage is keenly felt are academic performance, work or career, and marriage.

Academic life. Adults who were sexually abused as children often have a poor self-concept and little self-esteem, as previously stated, and this affects their performance at every level of their education. Usually these people fail to live up to their potential because they do not believe in themselves and their ability to achieve, no matter how gifted they may be. As a consequence, their ability to learn is seriously impaired. Often, no matter what the learning task, victims of child abuse begin with the notion that they will probably fail rather than the conviction that they are as good or better than the next person and will succeed, and as a consequence they do poorly. The fear of failure causes these victims severe anxiety, which gets in the way of their learning any subject or task. More often than not, these abused people never live up to their academic potential, which in turn influences their choice of employment or career in later life.

Work or career. People who have a poor self-concept or limited self-esteem often choose a type of employment significantly below their capability, and even in this employment they often feel inadequate. No matter what the job, these sexually abused people find learning the essentials of the job more difficult than do most other people. They are constantly fighting the anxiety caused by the challenge of doing something new and unfamiliar, and they are convinced that they can learn only with an almost superhuman effort on their part. Once they

have mastered the essentials of the job after much difficulty, they often do not feel satisfied and fulfilled by the employment and begin to look at greener pastures elsewhere, although they are afraid to make the jump to a new type of work for fear that they might fail. When a job becomes intolerable, they try another and still another, but they never seem satisfied and fulfilled with any job.

Marriage. The loss of protection that often accompanies sexual abuse—a sense of betrayal, the loss of trust in others, daily fear, and an overwhelming sense of helplessness—seriously affects the developing child's ability to learn how to relate to other people. As a consequence, individuals abused as children often fail to develop social skills and have serious difficulties relating to most other people. When they marry, they are seriously handicapped in their attempt to develop a sense of trust in and intimacy with their spouse. Their failure to trust their spouse and fear of being hurt again keep them from being open and honest in their dealings with their spouse, and make for a dysfunctional marriage almost from the beginning.

In conclusion, it can be said that approximately half the people sexually abused as children develop serious psychological problems as a consequence of the abuse and usually carry those psychological problems into adulthood unless they receive adequate psychological treatment. Sexual abuse during childhood accounts for many personality disorders and almost all cases of multiple personality.

RECOMMENDED READING

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How Can I Keep From Singing?

James Torrens, S.J.

The hills around will be baking,
and dry to a bed of hay,
be bright as gold in the morning
and panting by midday.

Refrain:

*But today the hills are laughing,
look up from your work and see.*

A cloud is afloat with water,
the slope is fresh with a stream,
the sun on the grass unveils
a paradise of green.

*It's a day when the hills are laughing,
look up from your work and see.*

The hills are green and shapely,
the poppy and lupine grow;
it's a sin to be totting figures
in this Irish kind of glow.

*For today the hills are laughing,
look up from your toil and see.*

meditation, as difficult as always to compose. My poor and sporadic efforts at centering prayer leave me, I must admit, susceptible to dozing. At that hour, I fear, I would be little apt for the Zen discipline of sitting (or is that just what I need?).

Recently it has dawned on me that I do have another resource, another method of prayer, that can carry me along. The Creator does make us markedly different, and the Spirit does indeed blow from unsuspected points of the compass. To be brief, when bogged down in prayer, or even when not, I try a little singing.

As a focus for meditation, I look to the gospel of the day (except for the more knotty parables or when Jesus is scolding the pharisees). One day last week, this springboard text was about the blind beggar Bartimaeus: along a street in Jericho, he cries out raucously for the Lord's attention. A favorite song verse sprang to my mind—and also, since I was alone in my room, to my lips: “Lord, I am blind, the way I cannot find. Help me to find the way.”

I can think now of a number of other standbys applicable to many a context—for example, “Lord Jesus, think on me, and take away my sin. Help me thy loving servant be, and keep me pure within.” (I have no idea where I learned this, but I do like it.)

Since the attitude of trust is often our object of petition, what better prayer than this quick hymn, taught to many of us in Detroit by an African-

In my golden jubilee year of religious life (so soon?), I find myself restless as ever at morning

American woman: "We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord, trusting in his holy name. He's never failed us yet."

Or what could be more Ignatian and helpful than this familiar appeal from *Godspell*: "Day by day, day by day, Oh dear Lord, three things I pray: to know you more clearly, to love you more dearly, to follow you more nearly, day by day." One can vary the series, paraphrase the wording, to prolong this song.

Taizé, the ecumenical community, has contributed wonderfully to prayer from the heart, with its well-known series of brief chants intended for repetition. I only wish I could remember more of them. My memory for song verses, as for poetry in general, is notoriously shaky. Yet from the early years, when my memory was more tenacious, I seem to have a considerable stock of favorite hymns: *Adoro te devote* of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the zenith of Eucharistic hymns; *Ave Maris Stella*, *Alma Redemptoris Mater* and a few other Marian hymns; *Veni, Creator Spiritus* and *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, to the Holy Spirit. Without wishing for the reinstatement of liturgical Latin, I still find that I cannot be grateful enough for the treasure of these age-old hymns.

This music by which our soul breathes need not at all be Latin. I find nothing more heartening than the strong old Protestant hymns: "O God, our help in ages past," "From all that dwell beneath the skies," the Old Hundredth (psalm), and in particular "How great thou art." What about "Amazing Grace"? Of course, but I fear we are cheapening it through constant, half-hearted use.

Catholic parishes, religious houses, and school communities still pursue their brave efforts to learn music and sing it. The results, I fear, are very mixed. Recently, at a synagogue service, I was struck by the hearty way everyone pitched in on the Hebrew chants. They were tapping into a deeply absorbed tradition of songful prayer. Their spirits, as well as I could judge, were pouring out.

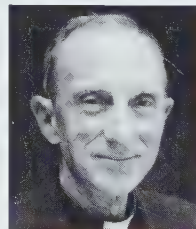
We Catholics are in a phase of sifting through new music, continually hunting in the paperback hymnals

for numbers that fit a liturgical or scriptural theme, or learning congregational responses such as the very good ones in the official booklet *Respond, Acclaim*. Often, despite heavy coaching, the congregation is barely audible.

Routinely, we hear that Catholics don't have the habit of singing. That rings false to me now. Give us something powerful or stirring that we know by heart, and we will all join in—that is what I think congregations want to say. Is this maybe the time to start settling on a basic repertoire, one that enjoys the benefit of real quality control (for nourishing and challenging text, with musical power)? That may be a lot to ask or suggest for the church in an extensive region, but not for a particular parish or other stable community. Will "I am the Bread of Life," "On Eagles' Wings," "Come to the Water" continue to have a central role? Maybe so; maybe they have sunk in.

My interest in the texts of hymns and other songs is not exactly new. I long ago took a fancy to writing song lyrics as an expressive form and have induced my students to do the same. If only (I keep saying to myself) I had the gift of musical accompaniment! I wrote the lyrics included with this essay (along with my students, who were trying something similar) early in springtime California this year.

One thing does give me pause about my tendency to sotto voce expressiveness, especially in public places. I used to think of it as a tendency of eccentric elders or the religiously off-kilter. I seem to have passed into their number. But wait, I can legitimize the impulse. As the Quakers so melodiously put it, "How can I keep from singing?"



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BOOK REVIEWS

Looking Back and Learning from Three Score and Ten by George Eppley, Ph.D. Lakewood, Ohio: E & D Productions. Three-tape audiocassette program (running time: approximately three hours). \$19.95.

In the audiocassette program *Looking Back and Learning from Three Score and Ten*, George Eppley taps into the current emphasis on family values. His focus is on the value of the elderly—a segment of society that he sees being pushed to the outer edge of the family circle, except on special occasions such as birthdays, baptisms, weddings, anniversaries, and holidays. Eppley believes that we as a society—including even the elderly among us—overlook the value of the elderly as wisdom figures.

In *Looking Back and Learning*, Eppley invites the elderly (but not only the elderly) to get in touch with their feelings and their memories of persons, places, and events that have shaped their lives and their values. In one segment, he tells a story recounted in Neil Grauer's *Remember Laughter: A Life of James Thurber*. A woman wrote to Thurber and proudly enclosed some doodlings her son had done. She claimed they were every bit as good as Thurber's cartoons, which were sometimes rather primitive. Thurber replied: "Your son can certainly draw as well as I can. The only trouble is, he hasn't been through as much."

Having been through seventy years of living has provided Eppley with a great deal of material for looking back and learning. A master storyteller, he shares his lifelong habit of reflecting and discerning what he has learned from the most ordinary of experiences—movies, books, newspapers and television, travel, ordinary people, and school. His relaxed manner and warm voice make the tapes easy listening. They are certain to inspire many listeners, young

and old, to start reflecting on their own experiences and recording them.

This audiocassette program will appeal to all age groups. Parents can use the tapes to introduce their children to storytelling. Practitioners of reminiscence therapy will find them useful, especially in attempting to reach clients whose memories have been impaired. Retirees or people who are thinking about retiring will find them challenging and inspiring. The young and middle-aged who are looking for gifts for parents, grandparents, and elderly friends will find the tapes a perfect fit.

Eppley, a professor of English at Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio, is also a published writer. His opinion pieces have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Newsday*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*. He and his wife, Anita Dixon Eppley, who teaches English at Cleveland State University, have coauthored three college textbooks on writing.

—Father Harry Bury, Ph.D.

Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities by Marvin R. Weisbord and Sandra Janov. San Francisco, California: Berrett-Koehler, 1995. 219 pages. \$19.95.

As a follow-up to a collection of papers on future search conferences entitled *Discovering Common Ground* (reviewed in *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, Spring 1995), Weisbord and Janov have produced the more focused *Future Search*. The new volume is a practical guide to future search conferences, which are based on a generic design to enable members of an organization to find common ground through

large group planning meetings. A search conference generally lasts three days, may involve sixty to seventy participants, and typically focuses on five topics: the past, external trends in the present, owning our actions in the present, creating common ground on ideal future scenarios, and action planning. In a search conference, the emphasis is on the whole system in the room, on global exploration before local action, on future focus and common ground, and on self-management and responsibility.

The book is organized into three sections. Section 1, "Learning" (five chapters), presents the theory, design, and conditions for the success of search conferences and provides case examples. Section 2, "Doing" (five chapters), deals with issues surrounding planning conferences, facilitation, and following up on action. Section 3, "Resources," is a series of appendixes covering such topics as selecting a site, setting up the room, and obtaining necessary materials. A sample design guide is also included.

The authors are clear as to the limitations of the future search process. They say it tends not to work if there are too few people, if it is being used to solve problems or resolve conflicts, if leadership is not supporting its outcomes, if the consultants seek to meet the group's needs, and if keynote speakers or presenters are featured. A future search conference is not a panacea. It is a mechanism through which the stakeholders of an organization or community meet to create a shared future vision and take responsibility for their own plans.

Future search conferences are equivalent to the meetings that religious orders and dioceses have called assemblies for many years. In an assembly of a diocese or province of a religious congregation, the whole system is on view, and the members attempt to find common ground for their movement into the future.

Future Search is an invaluable tool for leaders, facilitators, and consultants to use in designing and managing assemblies, whether of religious congregations or other organizations. The book provides a solid theoretical base for understanding the issues and the phases through which an assembly may pass. Those working with an assembly that explicitly acts out of a religious faith perspective need to add to what is in this book in order to integrate processes of prayer, reflection, and discernment into the framework of future search conferences. This book does not deal with such issues, but perhaps we will soon have accounts of how gatherings of large groups do find God in their development of a shared vision and action planning.

—David Coghlan, S.J.

After 50: Spiritually Embracing Your Own Wisdom Years by Robert J. Wicks. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1997. 88 pages. \$12.95.

Adult life, especially in the later stages of the human journey, is marked by unique rites of spiritual formation. The challenges of the post-fifty years include confronting new questions about the meaning of life, personal accomplishments, and relationships. Along with declining physical vigor, the "wisdom years" present adjustments in resilience, the reality of retirement (whether voluntary or enforced), and perhaps a reduction in income. The voice of one's inner critic is heard: Did I make the right choices? Am I being phased out? What is my role now? Who cares? Such nagging interrogations have to be addressed if the transition to mature age is to be navigated with serenity and compassion.

Robert Wicks, who directs the doctoral program in pastoral counseling at Loyola College (Baltimore, Maryland), has published numerous books on pastoral counseling and related topics in religious psychosocial growth, including *Touching the Holy* and *A Circle of Friends*. In *After 50: Spiritually Embracing Your Own Wisdom Years*, Wicks offers insightful and practical guidelines for those seeking to examine the spiritual integration of their later years.

After 50 is divided into the three main sections that explore midlife invitations to live in God with a deeper trust and a hopeful heart. Wicks's nurturing spirituality focuses on the transforming activities of praying, caring, and nurturing—specifically, praying to God, caring for others, and nurturing self. His spiritual exercises (to borrow the praxis nomenclature of Ignatius Loyola) are interrelated, creating a trinitarian theological framework. The communal and social justice actions of caring shape a praying that could risk being isolated from daily life issues. Nurturing self honors one's personal needs, thereby recognizing the gifts and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Praying acts as a refocusing corrective to the presence of God discovered in our nurturing and caring actions.

Wicks writes in an engaging, transparent style. He blends quotations, personal anecdotes, humor, and notes on practical markers on the road to integration of psychospiritual nurturance for the interior life. At times, the author makes you laugh aloud ("Elie Wiesel once stated: 'When you see an angel of the Lord coming with the words "Be not afraid," you

know you're in trouble." At other times, you might close the book and ponder a section just read ("Letting go of old ways of thinking in order to reach out for new ways of understanding, perceiving, and knowing is a little like letting go of one trapeze to grasp onto another. In such an exercise you have to leap blindly into midair to get to the new spot you want to reach").

As a spiritual mentor, the section I find most instructive is Wicks's countercultural assessment of how to live a quality interior life. He accurately describes the spiritual poverty of the postmodern, deconstructionist world and its skewed impact on the needs of the human heart:

A need for permanence in a civilization of transience; a need for the Absolute when all else is becoming relative; a need for silence in the midst of noise; a need for gratuitousness in the face of unbelievable greed; a need for contemplation in a century of action, for without contemplation, action risks becoming mere agitation; a need for communication in a universe content with entertainment and sensationalism; a need for peace amid today's universal outbursts of violence; a need for quality to counterbalance the increasingly prevalent response to quantity; a need for slowness to compensate for the present eagerness for speed; a need for transparency when everything seems opaque. Yes, a need for *the interior life*.

After 50 is a crisp book. Do not let its brevity deceive you. Nor should one think that its wisdom is exclusively for demicentenarians. It is particularly helpful for those in spiritual direction, formation, pastoral care, and counseling ministry, as well as all who hunger for the interior life. Wicks, who writes with experience and expertise, will assist the reader in spiritually embracing life with wisdom.

—John P. Mossi, S.J., D.Min.

Life After Youth: Making Sense of the Transition at Midlife by Sean Sammon. New York, New York: Alba House (in press).

Sean Sammon's book is a tale of two writers. On one hand, the author writes as a psychologist, charting current developmental theory regarding the middle years and offering clarifying insights into that stage of life. On the other hand, Sammon writes as an evocative storyteller, exploring his own unique passage through these mysterious years in a series of

personal essays. The result is a blending of vivid anecdote with psychological theory, first-person account with current research, in a highly literate and engaging style.

Life After Youth gains energy when the author takes off his psychologist's hat to tell poignant and compelling stories. In a chapter entitled "Testosterone Trials," Sammon recounts the time in his own life when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor and candidly chronicles a surprising side effect. Elsewhere in the book, he reflects empathically on a woman friend's recurrent cancer and the impact it had on his image of God. The most moving story, however, concerns the murder in Rwanda of his close Marist-brother friend and how the incident precipitated Sammon's own crisis of limits at midlife. In each case, we encounter a person whose impulse to tell stories may arise as much from his need to grieve as from his need to share his experiences. Sammon's book reminds me of Sam Keen's insight that storytelling affirms our fundamental need to find ultimate meaning in our lives and is functionally equivalent to believing in God.

In addition to his own personal anecdotes, Sammon peppers his text throughout with literary references that add depth and visceral impact to the writing. Readers will find themselves resonating with Sammon's clear treatment of the midlife transition. At times, though, he displays a tendency to hold too closely to Levinson's theory of adult development. For example, one could quibble with the statement that "every transition lasts for an average of four to five years." For the most part, however, the book offers nuanced language to help us name our experiences more accurately, and it provides an overall paradigm of midlife development from which we can learn and against which we can test our own maturing identity. Many readers will find their own experiences reflected in Sammon's portrayals of such midlife themes as revising identity, mentoring the young, reassessing sexuality, confronting mortality, and integrating polarities into a robust spirituality.

Several chapters end with a series of evocative reflection questions that readers may find helpful in making the material their own. These exercises can be used by the individual reader or by a group interested in discussing the issues presented. While a general audience would profit from reading *Life After Youth*, those in religious life and larger church circles stand to benefit the most, because many of Sammon's examples come from those reference points.

Sean Sammon has established himself as an important voice for those of us in midlife who struggle to make sense of religious life in these changing times. *Life After Youth* is yet another contribution from a

person of deep faith who has had the courage to share his story with us. In turn, Sammon invites us to learn that it is precisely through sharing our stories of midlife that we are healed and renewed.

—James R. Zullo, F.S.C.

Ethics in Pastoral Ministry by Richard M. Gula, S.S. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996. 166 pp. \$14.95.

Ministry faces increased scrutiny and criticism over charges of misconduct. Substantiated instances of clergy abuse cloud and imperil the privileged relationship of minister and congregation. As a consequence, new questions and concerns surface that earlier went unasked: Is Pastor Jane or Chaplain Peter someone with whom I can in confidence entrust my journey? How safe is my child at church camp or school? In my time of need, will I be exploited in any way? While the majority of ministers strive to vindicate the high standards of their call, there is an urgent need for a fresh articulation and strengthening of professional ethical standards in ministry.

Richard M. Gula, S.S., professor of moral theology at Saint Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California, has compiled the important ministerial guidebook *Ethics in Pastoral Ministry*. This text is essential reading for those in ministry and those in pastoral formation. With clarity and passion, Gula explores the ethical implications of propriety and professionalism in ministry.

This work provides a well-developed theological-ethical framework for reflecting on the moral responsibilities of sustaining ministry. The construction of this ethic builds on the conviction that "pastoral ministry as religious vocation is compatible with pastoral ministry as a profession. In fact, the two aspects reinforce one another." The best way to preserve the sacred integrity of this vocation is to enhance ministry with corresponding professional guidelines.

The book is divided into three major sections. Part 1, which underscores the communal, ecclesial dynamics of pastoral ministry, examines the tripartite coordinates of covenant, image of God, and discipleship as the theological grounding for pastoral ministry. The next chapters probe the complementary qualities of virtue, duty, and professional respon-

sibility as essential ministerial traits. Gula summarizes these critical topics by analyzing both the liberating and the negative dynamics of power in pastoral relationships.

The minister bears the fiduciary responsibility of exercising power and authority for the benefit of the individual served, never exploiting the vulnerable relationship with that individual. As a preventive to the conflict and confusion of dual relationships, the book explores the rationale for clear boundaries. Because of "the inevitable inequality of power in pastoral relationship . . . the greater burden of responsibility falls on the minister to keep the boundaries clear."

Part 2 addresses two crucial topics in pastoral ministry: sexuality and confidentiality. The chapter on sexuality is informative and nuanced. Sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and sexual harassment are carefully delineated. Gula tackles the sensitive area of touch and its potential for mixed messages. Furthermore, he assesses the use of appropriate touch in ministry. The section concludes with preventive strategies for ministerial self-care and supervision.

Gula's treatment of confidentiality is similarly helpful. Within the context of pastoral ministry, what makes information confidential? Who determines this? How? Are there discrete limits for confidentiality? Specifically, what are the ethical and legal differences between the clergy-penitent sacramental privilege and the pastoral conversation of nonordained ministers (e.g., lay spiritual directors, campus ministers, religious sisters and brothers) who engage in confidential dialogue? The chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical limits to confidentiality. Under what strict criteria can certain types of privileged information be disclosed?

Part 3 concludes with a proposed code of professional ministerial responsibility. Both the book and the code are presented as means of ongoing conversation focused on the topic of ethics in pastoral ministry. While the code is limited, not covering such areas as preaching, pastoral counseling, finances, the hiring and firing of employees, and administration practices, it is sufficiently broad to provide standards of professional excellence and ministerial integrity and competence.

Ethics in Pastoral Ministry should become a valuable resource for ministers and pastoral colleagues of all denominations. As an overdue and challenging contribution, this welcome text—for the university classroom, as well as for seminary, ministry training, and continuing education programs—deserves a cordial reception.

—John P. Mossi, S.J., D.Min.